Panajotis Kondylis

Die Aufklärung im Rahmen des neuzeitlichen Rationalismus

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HAMBURG

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Vorbemerkung

Das große Aufklärungsbuch von Panajotis Kondylis erschien in deutscher Sprache in einer gebundenen Ausgabe 1981 bei Klett-Cotta und dann noch einmal 1986 als Taschenbuch (dtv 4450). 1987 folgte eine griechische Ausgabe bei Themelio in Athen (3. Aufl. 1998). Die deutschen Ausgaben sind seit längerer Zeit vergriffen. Der Autor konnte keine Neuauflage dieses Standardwerks der Aufklärungsforschung mehr vorbereiten; er starb, allzu früh, 1998. Im Folgenden seien einige zentrale Aspekte des Buches kurz umrissen.

Die deutsche Aufklärungsforschung stand lange im übermächtigen Schatten des Idealismus, der Klassik, des Neuhumanismus und der Romantik. Das Buch von Kondylis hat unsere Vorstellungen über die Aufklärung grundlegend verändert. Kondylis unternimmt keine Epochenrekonstruktion, er überschreitet die nationalen Aufklärungstraditionen (Englands, Frankreichs, Deutschlands), er verzichtet auf eine Sozialgeschichte von Autoren und intellektuellen Gruppierungen, er untersucht vielmehr die Austauschprozesse zwischen Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie in der frühen Neuzeit. Im Zentrum seines Buches steht die Neuformierung der Philosophie ab 1750. Das Buch orientiert sich an der Rekonstruktion des Verhältnisses von Geist und Materie. Kondylis unterscheidet zwei Entwicklungsphasen aufklärerischen Denkens: Zunächst dominiert die cartesianische Trennung von Geist und Materie, von Seele und Körper (res cogitans – res extensa) den frühneuzeitlichen Rationalismus, der um 1750 abgelöst wird von einer „Rehabilitierung der Sinnlichkeit". Der sich neu konstituierende Sensualismus gibt das ältere Methodenideal der Mathematik und mechanistischen Physik auf und orientiert sich an den neuen Lebenswissenschaften des Biologismus. Kondylis verfolgt die Theorien des Dualismus bzw. der Einheit von Leib und Seele zurück bis in den europäischen Späthumanismus, erörtert anschließend den Einfluß der mechanistischen Physik (Newton) auf die rationalistischen Systembildungsprozesse des 17. Jahrhunderts, bestimmt das Verhältnis von mathematischem Methodenideal zum Neuplatonismus und definiert die rationale Theologie im Einflußfeld mechanistischer Kosmostheorien. In der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bahnt sich ein gravierender Konflikt an. Der mechanistische Intellektualismus gerät in die Krise. Nicht die konstruktive Vernunft Gottes soll nunmehr der Urgrund der Schöpfung sein, sondern die Selbstorganisation organischer Substanzen ersetzt tendenziell die mechanische Er-

klärung von Gott, Kosmos, Welt und Mensch. Mit diesem wissenschaftstheoretischen Paradigmenwechsel läßt Kondylis den zweiten Entwicklungsabschnitt der europäischen Aufklärung beginnen: Die Kritik von Metaphysik und Intellektualismus führt zu einer Aufwertung des Materie- und Entwicklungsbegriffs sowie einer komplementären Theorie von Natur und Kultur. Die Abwendung von den zeit- und ortsindifferenten Beweisführungen des Rationalismus ermöglicht die neue Zuordnung der Kategorien Denken und Willen, Gefühl und Vernunft, Natur, Geschichte und Kultur und führt zu einer Relativierung der Differenz von Faktizität und Normativität. Durch die Berücksichtigung des Verhältnisses von Wissenschaftstheorien und Philosophie erweitert Kondylis die Bezugs- und Gegenstandsfelder der empiristischen Aufklärung. Durch die Auswertung der Ergebnisse der französischen Forschung der sechziger und siebziger Jahre zur Wissenschaftstheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts gelingt Kondylis der Nachweis, daß sich zwischen den Spannungspunkten „Natur" und „Kultur" neue Wissenschaften (Naturgeschichte, Ethnologie, Kulturgeschichte, Soziologie, Historie) entfalten können, die erst im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert aus der Philosophie ausgeschieden werden. In dieser Zusammenschau des Verhältnisses der Philosophie zu den Natur-, Geschichts- und Kulturkonzeptionen rücken die philosophischen Traditionen Englands, Frankreichs und Deutschlands eng zusammen, der deutsche „Sonderweg" in der Philosophiegeschichte beginnt (wenn überhaupt) erst mit dem deutschen Idealismus bzw. Neuhumanismus. Fermente zwischen Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie sind im 18. Jahrhundert die Wirkungen der Philosophie von Spinoza und Leibniz. Zugleich gelingt es Kondylis, Kant und den Kantianismus unmittelbar in die Problembestimmungen aufklärerischer Empirismusbegründungen zu integrieren. Es entsteht eine einheitliche europäische Argumentationsachse, die mit dem englischen Empirismus beginnt, die fortgesetzt wird durch den französischen Vormaterialismus und die abgeschlossen wird durch die organizistische Natur- und Kulturphilosophie Deutschlands. In diesem Konzept werden die Grenzen fließend zwischen Philosophie, Naturtheorie, Historie, Ästhetik, Literatur und Kultur. Insofern ist es Kondylis gelungen, im Rahmen einer philosophiegeschichtlichen Studie zugleich das interdisziplinäre Argumentationspotential angrenzender Wissenschaften im Spiegel des Geist-Materie-Problems zu analysieren. Mit der Ablösung des dogmatischen Rationalismus durch den lebensphilosophischen Empirismus im Europa des 18. Jahrhunderts werden zahlreiche interdisziplinäre Grenzüberschreitungen vorweggenommen, die wir aus heutigen Wissenschaftsdiskussionen kennen.

Jörn Garber
Ulrich Kronauer

The Enlightenment within the Framework of New Times Rationalism

Translator's remark

This is the second PK work I have the honor of machine translating with ChatGPT. Some mistakes/formatting errors may have slipped in, some misinterpretations are bound to have appeared. I have done my best to diligently make sure the translation matches the German text (to the best of my abilities, with the little German I've picked up). Hopefully we will soon get an actual translation out. This thinker is very dear to me. Enjoy.

READ AND UPHOLD THE LAW.

~S

Preface

The great book on the Enlightenment by Panajotis Kondylis appeared in German in a hardcover edition in 1981 at Klett-Cotta, and again in 1986 as a paperback (dtv 4450). In 1987 a Greek edition followed at Themelio in Athens (3rd edition 1998). The German editions have been out of print for quite some time. The author was unable to prepare a new edition of this standard work of Enlightenment studies; he died, far too early, in 1998. What follows is a brief summary of some central aspects of the book.

For a long time, German Enlightenment studies stood under the overwhelming shadow of Idealism, Classicism, Neo-Humanism, and Romanticism. Kondylis' book fundamentally changed our understanding of the Enlightenment. Kondylis does not attempt an epochal reconstruction; he transcends national traditions of Enlightenment thought (England, France, Germany); he forgoes a social history of authors and intellectual groups; instead, he examines the exchange processes between philosophy and theory of science in the early modern period. At the center of his book is the reformation of philosophy after 1750. The book is oriented around reconstructing the relation between spirit and matter. Kondylis distinguishes two developmental phases of Enlightenment thought: initially, the Cartesian separation of spirit and matter, of soul and body (res cogitans – res extensa), dominates early modern rationalism, which around 1750 is replaced by a "rehabilitation of sensibility." The newly constituting sensualism abandons the older methodological ideal of mathematics and mechanistic physics and instead orients itself toward the new life sciences of biologism.

Kondylis traces theories of the dualism or unity of body and soul back to European late humanism; he then discusses the influence of mechanistic physics (Newton) on the rationalist systems of the 17th century, determines the relationship of the mathematical methodological ideal to Neoplatonism, and defines rational theology

within the influence of mechanistic cosmic theories. In the mid-18th century, a major conflict begins to emerge. Mechanistic intellectualism falls into crisis. No longer is God's constructive reason to be seen as the foundation of creation; instead, the self-organization of organic substances tends to replace the mechanical explanation of God, cosmos, world, and man.

With this shift in the theory of science, Kondylis lets the second developmental phase of the European Enlightenment begin: the critique of metaphysics and intellectualism leads to an elevation of the concept of matter and development, and a complementary theory of nature and culture. Turning away from the timeless, placeless proofs of rationalism makes possible a new alignment of categories: thinking and willing, feeling and reason, nature, history, and culture; it leads to a relativization of the difference between facticity and normativity.

By considering the relation between theories of science and philosophy, Kondylis expands the scope and object fields of empirical Enlightenment thought. Through the incorporation of the results of French research in the 1960s and 1970s on the theory of science in the 18th century, Kondylis succeeds in demonstrating that between the poles of "nature" and "culture," new sciences (natural history, ethnology, cultural history, sociology, historiography) can emerge — sciences that only later, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, separate themselves from philosophy.

In this synthesis of the relationship between philosophy and conceptions of nature, history, and culture, the philosophical traditions of England, France, and Germany draw closely together; the German "special path" in the history of philosophy (if it even exists) only begins with German Idealism and Neo-Humanism. Mediating forces between philosophy and science theory in the 18th century include the influence of the philosophies of Spinoza and Leibniz. At the same time, Kondylis manages to integrate Kant and Kantianism directly into the problem-structure of Enlightenment empiricism. Thus, a unified European line of argument emerges, beginning with English empiricism, continuing through French proto-materialism, and concluding with the organicist philosophy of nature and culture in

Germany.

In this conception, the borders between philosophy, natural theory, historiography, aesthetics, literature, and culture become fluid. In this way, Kondylis succeeds, within a study of the history of philosophy, in analyzing the interdisciplinary potential of neighboring sciences through the lens of the mind-matter problem. With the replacement of dogmatic rationalism by life-philosophical empiricism in 18th-century Europe, many interdisciplinary crossings are anticipated, ones we recognize today in contemporary scientific debates.

Jörn Garber
Ulrich Kronauer

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CHAPTER ONE
Basic Concepts for Grasping the Essence of the Enlightenment

1. Spirit and Sensuality, or the Question of Being and the Question of Value

The question of the relationship between spirit and sensuality can, in a certain sense, be regarded as the central problem of all philosophy. From a historical perspective, the central importance of this question can already be demonstrated by pointing to the entanglement of the earliest beginnings of philosophy with the animistic worldview.[1] The first organized and all-encompassing worldview is dualistic, i.e., it arises on the basis of the "discovery" of spirit or spirits, which are supposed to be separate from what is sensually perceptible and to govern its fates. It is therefore no coincidence that philosophèmes which have been decisive for the intellectual tradition of the so-called Occident pay homage to dualism,

1 P. Radin has shown that the animistic worldview must be classified as a philosophical achievement, both with regard to its questions (origin and nature of the world, meaning of human life, rules of moral behavior, etc.) and its capacity for abstract thought, as well as in terms of its origin in the intellectual effort of specific individuals. Radin refutes the view, held especially by Lévy-Bruhl and Cassirer, of a pre-logical-mythical thinking which is supposedly opposed and inferior to "rational" thought—a view that, as Radin rightly notes, only reflects the self-satisfied value judgments and thinking habits of European scholars (Primitive Man as Philosopher, esp. xxiv ff., 30 f., 99 ff., 208 f., 246 f., 252 ff., 292 ff., 345 f.). In his critique of Lévy-Bruhl's division between "rational" and "irrational" thinking, Lévi-Strauss largely confirmed Radin's results 35 years later (La pensée sauvage, esp. ch. 1, first part of ch. 8, and last part of ch. 9). The remarks of Topitsch on the continuity of thought structures between mythology and traditional philosophical metaphysics must also be regarded as a confirmation of the same position (Vom Ursprung und Ende der Metaphysik, esp. 3 f., 18 f., 95 f., 221 f., 285 f.).

i.e., to the fundamental opposition between spirit and sensuality. It suffices to recall Platonism, whose original version, precisely with regard to the dualistic principle, is deeply bound up with the animistic-religious thought of the Orphic-Pythagorean cult,[2] and whose historical effect — not least through Christianity[3] — was so enduring; the Cartesian separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*[4] as well as the Kantian one between the intelligible and the sensible[5] likewise represent prominent examples of the same phenomenon. It would nonetheless be mistaken to consider the question of the relationship between spirit and sensuality as central only when a dualistic structure of thought is present, or to assume that the primacy of this question appears exclusively in dualistic structures of thought. The ineliminable spiritualist or materialist inflections of the monistic philosophèmes known to us thus far form in themselves an eloquent argument for the thesis that what is at issue here are attempts precisely to overcome the antagonism of spirit and sensuality in the sense of the former or the latter — in other words: not only does this antagonism form the starting point and thus the *conditio sine qua non* of the effort to think, but its respective "overcoming" is in essence achieved only through the absolutization of one of its contending elements; it is therefore polemical in intent, and for that reason it also cannot bring about the definitive end of the said antagonism.

From a systematic perspective, the more general significance that may be ascribed to the question of the relationship between spirit and sensuality becomes more readily apparent when we call to mind the pairs of concepts into which the said question could be resolved or translated: subject–object, God–world, possibility–actuality, soul–body, intellect–senses, reason–drives, ought–being, normative–causal, rhyme of God or of reason–history. All important problems of philosophy are

2 See also Leisegang, "Platon", cols. 2421, 2424, 2433. Cf. Nestle, Vom Mythos zum Logos, 540.

3 See generally Ivanka, Plato Christianus, esp. 68 f., 469 ff.

4 Descartes associated his separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* not least with the doctrine of Platonic innatism. But he was also likely aware of the Platonic definition of χώρα. See Taylor, *Platonism*, 51 ff.; Gilson, *Études sur le rôle...*, 28 f.; Smith, *New Studies*, 194 n.1. Cf. also p. 182.

5 The influence of metaphysical-religious traditions on Kant's dual-world doctrine has recently been elaborated by Topitsch, *Die Voraussetzungen der Transzendentalphilosophie*, 21 ff.

represented in these pairs of concepts, and that implies that a complete answer to the question of the relationship between spirit and sensuality must generate a cosmology, a morality, an epistemology, and also a philosophy of history, which will structurally correspond to one another if the thinker in question proceeds logically consistently or with systematic intent. This, however, occurs relatively rarely, since at the beginning of philosophical effort one usually does not encounter the entire complex, but only one of the named pairs of concepts—which is, of course, dependent on time and temperament. Nonetheless, there always exists an implicit connection with the other parts of the complex; the inevitability of this connection could be explained within the framework of a general investigation into the logical and ideological interrelation of ethics and metaphysics. In the course of our investigation, the connection between ethics and ontology will repeatedly and in two respects be addressed: on the one hand as a statement of the entanglement of the question of being and the question of value, i.e., of the projection of ontology in the light of moral needs and postulates, and on the other hand as a demonstration of the resulting structural parallelism between the ontological and moral-philosophical levels within the same philosophy. In addition, it will be shown that this same structural parallelism also extends to the levels of epistemology and of the philosophy of history, especially insofar as these equally represent particular cases of the general entanglement of the question of being and the question of value. In demonstrating all these structural interconnections, the question of the relationship between spirit and sensuality in its aforementioned metamorphoses will be used as a criterion; thereby, its central systematic significance is simultaneously demonstrated.

Why this question must be central both historically and systematically becomes clearer if we take a closer look at the concept of spirit. In doing so, we are not interested in finding out whether spirit "exists" (whatever that may mean) or what it "is"; we want only to trace, in a purely descriptive way, the function of this concept within the philosophical tradition. It may certainly appear impossible to discover a common thread behind the confusing ambiguity of the concept of spirit that could lead to the deciphering of its function. It is well known that in ancient Greek the word $\pi\nu\varepsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ did not even have its later meaning, but stood for a refined yet still material principle of

life — a conception that also remained alive in the Christian Middle Ages and continued to have an effect deep into the modern era.[6] The supersensuous was initially "discovered" and represented primarily through the concept of *νοῦς*, while *πνεῦμα*, which was still understood materially even by the Stoics, only under the influence of Jewish-Christian thought finally reached complete de-sensualization,[7] so that it could now be contrasted not only with *σῶμα* but also with *ψυχή*.[8] The Latin Middle Ages primarily used the term *spiritus* (as a translation of *πνεῦμα*) for the Holy Spirit, whereas spirit as a higher human faculty was expressed mainly through the term *mens*, in which not only the Stoic-Ciceronian but also the Platonic-Aristotelian

6 The ancient notion of a material πνεῦμα (Jaeger, *Das πνεῦμα im Lykeion*, esp. 43 ff., 55 ff.) lives on in a prominent place in Stoicism (Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, I, 73 f., 83, 85 f., 342 f.) and is adopted in the Christian Middle Ages through Cicero's translation (spiritus vitalis, *De Nat. Deorum*, II, 45) (see e.g. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. 27, Art. 2, ad 1). Even in modern times, this concept played an important role (see F. Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, IV, 3 = *Works*, I, 605 f., and especially Descartes, *Passions de l'âme*, I, 10 and 34 = AT, XI, 334 f., 354 f.).

7 For the study of this development, H. Siebeck's 1880 essay on the development of the doctrine of spirit was foundational (see bibliography). More than three decades later, Siebeck supplemented his analysis in a second treatise, incorporating newer literature, in which he emphasized the importance of Philo, but ultimately attributed the complete desensualization of the *pneuma* concept primarily to Paul (*Neue Beiträge*, esp. 5 f., 15). H. Leisegang focused on Philo as a representative transitional figure and pointed to his connections to religious ideas in Hellenism and partly also to Stoicism, while denying any decisive influence from the biblical concept of spirit (*Der Heilige Geist*, esp. 13 f., 75, 114 ff.). In contrast, Fr. Rüsche argued that the desensualization of *pneuma* occurred not through Philo—who merged the Platonic-Aristotelian νοῦς with the Stoic concept of *pneuma*, thus constructing something like a "light-pneuma" similar to Poseidonius—but rather through Origen and especially Augustine, under the decisive influence of Platonic thought; in the Neoplatonists, a return to Philo's middle position is even observable (*Das Seelenpneuma*, esp. 20, 23 f., 30 f., 42 f., 46 f., 55, 68; this book summarizes and develops earlier work, see bibliography). G. Verbeke reaffirmed Philo's central role, but in opposition to Leisegang emphasized the biblical origin of Philo's concept of *pneuma* (*L'Évolution de la doctrine du Pneuma*, esp. 172 ff., 219 f., 257 ff., 510 ff.; esp. against Leisegang 247 ff.).

8 See e.g. Paul, 1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12.

tradition of *νοῦς* and *διάνοια* continues to operate.[9] Through these and similar terminological shifts and struggles arises that remarkable diversity of the concept of spirit which is taken up by modernity in order to be adapted to new conditions. Nevertheless, it can be shown that although the socio-historical and intellectual-historical situation has changed, the needs that originally led to the adoption and development of the concept of spirit have remained more or less the same — which, incidentally, explains not only the continuation of the old diversity but also of traditional structures of thought. It is precisely the recognition of this continuity that will put us in a position to duly assess the specific consequences of the modern-era tendency toward the elimination of the concept of spirit.[10]

An initial approach to grasping the function of the concept of spirit is offered by the observation that, in the classical philosophical tradition, the assumption of a spirit in the human being is tied to the assumption of a spirit in the metaphysical sense, i.e., of a god.[11] This

9 Decisive for the Middle Ages was Augustine's terminology (see the summaries by Gilson, *Saint Augustin*, 53 n.1; 282 n.2; and Rüsche, *Das Seelenpneuma*, 64 ff.). Cf. Bonaventure's definition, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, I, 4 = *Opera* V, 297; cf. Thomas, *Sententiae* I, Dist. III, Q. V = *Opera* I, 123 f. On Cicero's reception and transformation of Stoic psychological terminology, see Schindler, *Die stoische Lehre...*, esp. 84 ff. (on *mens*), 93 ("Precisely the emphasis on ethics makes the upper levels of the *animus* clearer.").

10 In recent decades, this demand has been made by both proponents of analytic philosophy (especially Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, esp. 167 ff.) and more or less biologically-oriented anthropologists (Plessner still maintains significant reservations, *Die Stufen des Organischen*, 304 f.; Gehlen, *Urmensch*, 89 ff., and Portmann, *Biologie und Geist*, 10 ff., go much further). Also worth noting are tendencies such as Armstrong's, which states: "mental states are nothing but physical states of the brain" (*A Materialist Theory of Mind*, xi). That in a Marxist-Leninist philosophical dictionary such as that edited by G. Klaus and M. Buhr the word "Geist" does not appear at all is not surprising. — I mention these and similar trends already here because one of the theses of this work is precisely that they represent the continuation and culmination of movements characteristic of modernity as a whole, which first arise systematically in the Enlightenment and become more prominent in the 19th and 20th centuries.

11 Typical: Plato in *Timaeus* 41c–d, 69c–d. Aristotle also regards the νοῦς as the sure sign of the participation of the human in the divine (*De Part. Anim.* 656a8, 686a28–29; *De An.* 408b29; *De Gen. Anim.* 736b28, 737a10). The Stoic view

connection explains why the "true" spirit in the human being is not, or not primarily, regarded as a faculty of cognition, but rather as an instance that stands above the cognitive faculties in the narrower sense and guides them with regard to its own higher postulates and aims.[12] Spirit thus appears as broader or of a different kind than the individual faculties of cognition; it serves not, or not merely, as an organ or as an organizer of empirically grounded knowledge, but rather as the discoverer or bearer of highest and ultimate truths—at least to the

on this is summarized by Cicero in *Tusculan Disputations*, Book V, Chapter 13 §38 and Chapter 25 §70. For Augustine, the spirit in man is *imago* and *particeps Dei* (*Enarr. in Psalm.* XLII, §6 = PL 36, col. 480; cf. *De Symbolo*, I, §2 = PL 40, col. 628). In connection with Augustine, Bonaventure: *In I. Libr. Sententiarum*, Dist. IX, Dub. IV = *Opera* I, 189; cf. Dist. III, Q. III = *Opera* I, 75. See also Leisegang's analysis referring to Philo, *Der Heilige Geist*, 93, 104 ff.

12 This is ultimately the meaning of Plato's distinction between νοῦς, which is associated with the τοῦ παντός ἀρχήν (cf. *Republic* 511b) and identified with truth (*Philebus* 65d), and διάνοια (*Republic* 511c–d). Aristotle's opposition between νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη (*Analytica Posteriora* 100b) has the same significance. The function of this distinction consisted in strengthening the moral-normative component of the concept of spirit; in its perspective, a value-free or merely instrumental-rational spirit appears as incomplete: even the most intelligent "immoralism," whatever that may mean, is *eo ipso* a sign of ontological inferiority. Conversely: "right" or "true" knowledge should always promote morality (as Jaeger formulated with regard to Plato: "By knowledge [Plato] does not mean modern science (*science*), but the spiritual sense for values, which the Greek calls *phronesis*," *Paideia*, p. 1277 n.1). Leisegang also rightly notes that for Plato, the Stoa, and Philo, knowledge and virtue are "interchangeable concepts" (*Der Heilige Geist*, 118). In view of this central function, it is no surprise that this distinction runs through the entire philosophical tradition. Paul also distinguishes between mere rational understanding and higher cognition (1 Cor. 1:19–21; cf. the wordplay in Eph. 3:19). Regarding the shift or reevaluation of the word "πνεῦμα," it is telling that Paul, who often uses the philosophical term νοῦς as a synonym for πνεῦμα to express the "higher" or "true" spirit (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:15; Rom. 2:2; 1 Cor. 2:1), always writes νοῦς when referring to states of weakness or corruption (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:14; Eph. 4:17; 2 Tim. 3:8). Augustine also posits that the *intellectus* directly affected by God is superior to discursive *ratio* (*Sermo* XLIII, II, 3–III, 4 = PL 38, cols. 254–256). Thomas, following Aristotle, reports something similar: *intellectus* relates directly and intuitively to the *principia*, while *ratio* and *scientia* operate discursively and must apply the *principia* recognized by the *intellectus* (*Summa Theol.* I, Q. LIX, Art. 1 ad 1; II–II, Q. XLIX,

extent that these are each deemed accessible to the human being. In other words: the spirit of the philosophical tradition is not to be grasped primarily in epistemological terms, at least so long as the object of knowledge is not merely the perceptible world; recourse is taken to its higher cognitive capacities whenever it is a matter of the ontological ground, whose knowledge must especially then be presented as objective and irrefutable when it is meant to undergird or justify a particular moral-normative scale of values. Only spirit discloses the respective "true" world of being and of ought. In view of this double principal task, it is secondary whether it is conceived in purely intellectualist terms or not (precisely for this reason two different concepts of rationalism can be derived from its definition, as we will yet see): the decision in this regard depends on the respective intellectual-historical constellation or opponent, and initially has nothing to do with the assumption of a spirit with the aforementioned double principal task. The ambiguity of the concept of spirit arises, among other things, from the fact that it sometimes primarily encompasses the intellect in contrast to the drives and the body, and sometimes primarily encompasses the psychic functions in general in contrast to the physiological-corporeal ones.[13] Depending on the scope

Art. V ad 3; *De Veritate*, Q. XV, Art. 1 = *Quaest. Disput.* I, 418). In modern philosophy, this same constellation appears in the antithetical concept-pairs *raison–entendement*, *reason–understanding*, *Vernunft–Verstand* (cf. above n.17).

13 Plato's double or ambivalent stance on the question of the soul's parts already marks the two positions between which the philosophical tradition has mostly moved. As is well known, Plato proposes a tripartition of the soul with a view to the inner organization of the ideal state (*Republic* 435c–444a), while on the other hand he must emphasize the unity of the soul when addressing the problem of immortality, i.e., its opposition to the mortal body (*Republic* 611b–612a). Important for the further development of this problem was Stoic psychology, which developed from Zeno's still flexible doctrine of faculties into Chrysippus' intellectualist monism (Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, I, 85 ff., 142 ff.). Paul, who contrasts πνεῦμα not only with σῶμα but also with ψυχή (see n.8), also speaks simply of πνεῦμα when he has in mind above all its opposition to the body (Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 7:34; especially Gal. 5:17; in 1 Cor. 12:4 he quite clearly refers to several faculties of the same one πνεῦμα). All these, by the way often shifting, distinctions and classifications aim at theoretically securing the independence or dominance of the higher or pure spirit and at the same time explaining, to some extent, why this dominance often fails in practice. We will see what significant role such questions played in 18th-century moral

of spirit, the scope of sensuality also varies;[14] yet the dividing line and the antagonism between the two always persist—especially since, as mentioned, even monistic conceptions step onto the stage in the name of the one or the other.

Since spirit, in the philosophical tradition—under whatever name—refers to both "true" being and "true" ought, indeed is supposed to contain both within itself, its opposition to sensuality does not merely serve as a precondition for attaining a definitive cognition, i.e., one freed from the contradictory multiplicity of the sensual, but *eo ipso* also as a defense of a value scale against factors perceived as threatening. The threat, to be sure, comes from sensuality, in whose determination the same connection between ontological and normative question appears as with the concept of spirit—only this time with negative signs: sensuality as such is presented both as a lower stratum of being and at the same time as an obstacle to the realization of morality—or, at best, as morally indifferent;[15] only as sensuality

philosophy debates.

14 As the aforementioned pairs of concepts already imply, and as the diversity of philosophical levels demands, the word *Sinnlichkeit* ("sensuality") in our investigation must have several meanings. First, it refers to biological sensuality; then, to "inner sensuality" (using a fitting expression from Herder, *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden* = SW, VIII, 190, 239), namely, drives, passions, etc., which are traced back to the bodily constitution of the human being and are assumed to obstruct the rule or activity of the intellect; third, to geographical and sociohistorical sensuality, meaning the sum of factors that influence the spirit of a person living in a geographically specific country and historically determined society; and fourth, to cosmic sensuality, i.e., the matter of the universe in contrast to the conception of God. (Sensuality as a faculty of knowledge in the Kantian sense must also not be forgotten.) We aim to determine structural similarities among these various levels (from anthropological to sociohistorical and cosmological) on the basis of how sensuality is evaluated in each respective sense, using this multidimensional definition of sensuality, which corresponds to an equally multidimensional definition of spirit.

15 The ontological—and thus also moral-philosophical—devaluation of sensuality is well known to be a key feature of the Platonic-Christian tradition. Even Aristotle, for all his elevation of sensuality compared to Platonism, still reserves the power of the *primum movens* for pure νόησις, and accordingly sees the highest fulfillment of human life in *theoria*. Sensuality is again viewed as morally indifferent or entirely foreign to morality when it is understood as

spiritualized to varying degrees—within the framework of a spiritualist monism or a consciously or unconsciously teleologically tinged materialism—can it be regarded as entirely harmless in normative-moral terms. Hence, the defense of spirit signifies not only partisanship for a particular conception of being, but also—and not infrequently primarily—commitment to those values with which that conception is associated. In light of the normative function of spirit, which one must bring fully and in all its metamorphoses to mind, it is neither coincidental nor trivial that the fundamental difference between humans and (other) animals has been seen in the exclusive presence of spirit in the former—[16]where this spirit is not merely described as a value-neutral organ of knowledge or as an instrument of self-preservation in the struggle for existence, but as a normatively and morally tinged and correspondingly binding instance. In this regard it is telling that in the language of the philosophical tradition, those very terms which designate spirit as an ontologically given entity or as the source of highest ontological knowledge are simultaneously used to make visible the force of moral insight in humans; they then intertwine to the point of indistinguishability with other terms, such as ὀρθός λόγος, *ratio*, *Vernunft*, etc., which in part have a direct moral-philosophical and normative reference.[17] This makes the concept of

merely the realm of mechanical causality. Then, as Kant's example shows, a new separation between *intelligible* and *sensible* becomes necessary to secure morality (even Plato knew the opposition between causal ανάγκη and autonomous νοῦς; cf. *Timaeus* 48a).

16 Typical is the formulation of Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a10.

17 The synonymy of νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη, σύνεσις , and φρόνησις is found in Plato when he argues against the hedonistic principle (cf. e.g. *Philebus* 21b, 59d, 66b, etc.). Also in Aristotle, the morally active νοῦς is identified with γνώμη, σύνεσις , or φρόνησις (cf. e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1143a20–28). On the other hand, νοῦς and λόγος are just as much identical in practical terms (both are supposed to rule—cf. *Politics* 1254b5 with 1295b6, 8 and 1260a19) as are ὀρθὸς λόγος and φρόνησις (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1144b28). K. Bärthlein has shown, against one-sided interpretations, that in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and Platonic writings, the term ὀρθὸς λόγος refers both to "right knowledge" and to the objectively existing, ontologically and anthropologically grounded moral law (*Der ΟΡΘΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ in der großen Ethik des Corpus Aristotelicum*, esp. 239 f., 245 f., and *Der ΟΡΘΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ und das ethische Grundprinzip in den platonischen Schriften*, esp. 129, 139, 141f., 151f.). Again, it is a stereotypical identification of "true" knowledge and "right" action, or the thesis that

spirit even more ambiguous. But its ambiguity does not hinder it from fulfilling its normative function—on the contrary: it stems from the need to fulfill the said function under varying circumstances and against varying opponents, and furthermore facilitates the fusion of ontological and normative levels.

This fusion culminates in—or rather, is rooted in—the aforementioned connection between the assumption of a spirit in the human being and the assumption of a spirit in the metaphysical sense, i.e., of a god, however he may be understood: in any case, he himself likewise represents a personification of the unity of the ontological and the normative, insofar as he is supposed not only to embody "true" being but also the highest wisdom and goodness. Thus, the normative function of spirit receives ontological support—that is, it appears as the inescapable consequence of its origin and thus of its character.[18] Here,

knowledge is deficient so long as it does not align with certain moral principles (see above, n.12). This is why, even in the Christian tradition, the terms intended to designate scientific knowledge faculties are used synonymously with those reserved for the higher spirit only when it is assumed that such knowledge has already been completed or grounded through insight into the "true" being and ought. Characteristic of this is the double use of the word *ratio*, which can mean both merely scientific knowledge (see above, n.12) and higher normative knowledge. See Gilson's excellent analyses (*Saint Augustin*, 141 ff.; *Saint Bonaventure*, 362 ff.), which grasp the worldview dimension of the problem. On the double use of *ratio* in Thomas, see *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. LXXIX, Art. IX, Concl. (distinction between *ratio superior* and *ratio inferior*). In contrast to the statements quoted in n.12, in other places *intellectus* and *ratio* are used synonymously—just as in Aristotle—when the discussion concerns the control of impulses, i.e., the moral function of the higher spirit (e.g., *Summa Theol.*, I, LXXXI, Art. III, ad 2).

18 This is the meaning of the thesis that man is only capable of living according to divine or spiritual commandments because the same is ontologically anchored in him, or in other words, he acts morally because his very constitution is, at root, moral (cf. Plato, *Republic* 590d; similarly Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1177a13–17). Paul expresses the same connection very pointedly by using the word πνεῦμα twice in a row—once to designate the ontological principle of life and once to indicate the normatively commanding instance (Gal. 5:25). Heinze, in his still very readable book, briefly but clearly described the attempts to ground ethics ontologically on the basis of ancient *logos* doctrine (*Die Lehre vom Logos*, esp. 66 f., 145 ff., 197 f., 270 ff.; cf. his critical remarks 264 f.). As we shall see, the need for an ontological—or at least (after

the connection between ethics and ontology emerges in its classical form, which remained authoritative until roughly two centuries ago. In view of the long-standing association between spirit and god, the elimination of the latter had, of course, to threaten the former directly. And in view of the merging of the ontological and the normative on all levels (that of the human and of the divine spirit, as well as their relations to one another), the dispute over the nature and fate of spirit had to transform simultaneously into a battle over particular moral-normative conceptions. Still more: the threat to spirit was attacked all the more passionately from the idealist side, as it seemed to call into question the very possibility of objective values.[19] Even when the willingness existed to remove the concept "spirit" from philosophical vocabulary due to its conceptual vagueness, one could not avoid searching for new supersensuous instances[20] that could preserve the possibility of values and value-setting. This was perceived and presented as the final defense of life's meaning. Philosophy can therefore remain faithful to its original entanglement with the animistic worldview even after relinquishing "spirit" as a technical term or even as a metaphysical entity, insofar as it still wishes to sense in things the breath of the spiritual, which it calls their "meaning." It need not believe in God or his helpers or adversaries as powers that

the elimination of traditional theology) anthropological—grounding of ethics was felt no less strongly than in earlier eras.

19 Most eloquent is the way M. Stirner, for example, links his nihilistic critique of traditional ethics with a polemic against the concept of spirit (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 10 ff.). It is perhaps no coincidence that Heidegger, at the very beginning of a treatise devoted to the question of nihilism, thematizes the elimination of spirit: "The removal of the supersensuous ends in a neither-nor with respect to the distinction between the sensuous (αἰσθητόν) and the non-sensuous (νοητόν). The removal ends in the senseless. Yet it remains the unthought and inescapable presupposition of the deluded attempts to escape the senseless through mere sense-giving" ("Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist tot,'" in *Holzwege*, 193). Cf. above, n.10.

20 This is the case with Kant, who relatively early "set aside" the concept of spirit (see *Träume eines Geistersehers...*, AA II, 351 f.; cf. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA V, 467 f.) and instead in his mature work uses terms such as "I," "consciousness in general," or "intelligence." Nevertheless, this elimination of the term *Geist* did not result in a rejection of the supersensuous as such—and the reason for this was not merely epistemological, but at least as much moral-philosophical.

stir behind or within things and invisibly guide their fates in order to maintain the connection to its own origin; the assertion that life or the world has a meaning is fully sufficient for this. In truth, this assertion —which we will later consider in terms of its concrete social relevance —is more comprehensive than any theology or demonology (and for this reason is much more hesitantly relinquished than God), which is evident in the fact that the latter serve precisely to interpret the meaning of life and prove unusable once they can no longer fulfill this task for various reasons. Regardless of whether priority is given to the question of meaning or to that of spirit, it was taken for granted until quite recently that spirit was the valuing, norm-setting, i.e., meaning-giving and meaning-filled instance. The attack on it—first in its divine, then also in its human dimension—had therefore to mobilize the entire philosophical front. The question of being was fought over like a question of value—and this was to be expected, since the question of being and the question of value were always thought together within the philosophical tradition. By orienting our investigation around the broadly conceived question of the relation between spirit and sensuality, we thus touch on a—or rather *the*—nerve center of philosophical thought as such. And at the same time, we enter a thematic domain in which, beyond the disputes of the academic study, decisions of the greatest socio-political relevance are made.

2. The Polemical Character of Thought in the Enlightenment and Its Interpretations

I would now like to advance the thesis that the so-called Enlightenment is an attempt—or rather, a plurality of attempts—to answer the question of the relationship between spirit and sensuality. This perspective, in light of what has been said so far, is neither incidental nor does it neglect what is specific to the Enlightenment (for one could rightly respond that every age has attempted to answer the same question). Quite the contrary. For what is to be shown is that in the age of Enlightenment, the problem of sensuality is posed in an

especially urgent way, which is why the question of its relation to spirit gains an intensity previously unknown and, beyond that, a permanent one. The Enlightenment had to pose this question with such insistence because the rehabilitation of sensuality constituted one of its most important ideological weapons in the struggle against theological ontology and morality. At the same time, this marked one of the nerve centers of modern thought in general. For the rehabilitation of sensuality raised enormous logical problems, whose resolution became all the more pressing the more unavoidable and indispensable that rehabilitation appeared, in one form or another. Due to the scope of the question concerning the relationship between spirit and sensuality, and due to the inherent power of that question to take on the most varied forms, the rehabilitation of sensuality in the age of Enlightenment set all levels of philosophical inquiry into feverish motion simultaneously. In epistemology, the antagonism between intellectualism and empiricism—or between mathematism/geometrism and the experimental method—intensifies; in cosmology, the relationship between God and world must be rethought; in anthropology and ethics, reason and drives demand recognition of their own rights and thus exacerbate the tension between "ought" and "being"; while in the philosophy of history, the opposition between the causal conception of historical development and its desired end, understood in normative categories, becomes downright glaring.

What is now required is not only to clarify the structural connection of all these levels within the work of each thinker and to account for possible deviations from the ideal type of that work, but also—and above all—to assess appropriately the logical character of the questions posed in the age of Enlightenment, in order to understand the unity of that intellectual effort amidst the diversity of its approaches. For the unity lies not in the answers, but in the questions—a claim of the utmost importance for the correct apprehension of that era, and one that could save research from many a debacle. The diversity of answers springs from the diversity of fundamental attitudes, or from the polemical needs of the individual thinkers. In my view, the study of the sources shows that an interpretation of the various positions and counter-positions, guided by the assumption that thinking is polemical in its essence, can lead the

farthest. From this standpoint, not only the consistency but also the contradictions of a given body of thought can be fully explained—something particularly advantageous for the investigation of the Enlightenment, in which dualistic oscillation, conditioned by discomfort before the ultimate consequences of the rehabilitation of sensuality, is the order of the day. The best way to grasp a particular philosophy in terms of intellectual history is thus to clearly identify its opponent and to consider what it must or wants to prove in order to disqualify that opponent. In the polemic of all against all, or of the philosophical factions against one another, arises—depending on the goal of the polemic or the guiding ideal—a diversity of variations on one and the same theme, that is, on the fundamental question around which the polemic revolves. The logical structure of the fundamental question forms the constant and, at the same time, indispensable element; the fundamental attitudes and the polemics are the variable and interchangeable factors. Thus emerges the general intellectual image of the age in its manifoldness, while the specific image of each thinker's work results from the intersection of the logical structure of the fundamental question with the respective fundamental attitude.

From the thus-grounded insight into the unity and diversity of the Enlightenment era, it becomes clear that the widespread assumptions that it was the age of rationalism or of optimism, etc., must prove to be of little help. Equally untenable—in view of the chronological sequence of the publication and reception of major works—and moreover highly misleading is the once-popular claim that a period of extreme Enlightenment rationalism was followed by one of pre-Romantic protest through feeling. In reality—that is, in the light of the sources—optimism and pessimism, even eschatology and nihilism, faith in reason and glorification of feeling, confidence in the power of the human spirit and epistemological despair, religiousness motivated in this or that way and atheism, moralism and eudaimonism, altruism and egoism are all indispensable tendencies of one and the same era, whose equally legitimate sons include such different personalities and thinkers as Rousseau and La Mettrie, Herder and Locke, Fichte and the Marquis de Sade. All of these currents and opposed directions must be seen in their unity—namely, as possible answers to the fundamental question that the rehabilitation of sensuality posed, positively or negatively. Their coexistence is a fact,

and the key to an adequate understanding of the total phenomenon conventionally called the "Age of Enlightenment" lies not in denying it, but in explaining it. Given this situation, it was inevitable that scholarship—especially as the discovery and study of neglected sources progressed, and as certain rationalist positions (which had formed the ideological core of the older, one-dimensional image of the Enlightenment) lost their persuasive force after two world wars and massive social upheavals—would end up in an impasse. It thus corresponds to a double necessity that in recent years the demand for a radical break from all linear conceptions of the Enlightenment has grown increasingly louder.[21] The diversity and multidimensionality of that era have thus been asserted; but in my judgment and to my knowledge, a convincing explanation of them is still lacking. It is the ambition of this work to provide such an explanation by means of the conceptual apparatus developed here—namely, through the two theses concerning the interweaving of the question of being with the

21 See especially Diedmann's well-founded critique of the works of Hazard and Cassirer, which aim to work out the most coherent intellectual image of the Enlightenment possible, in doing so often having to suppress or overlook facts and texts ("An Interpretation of the 18th Century," in: *Studien*, 218 ff.; also: "Themen und Struktur der Aufklärung," in: *Diderot und die Aufklärung*, -4 ff.). Cf. Boas' review, esp. 246 f., which primarily criticizes the teleological character of Cassirer's concept ("Kant as fulfillment of the Enlightenment" etc.), as well as Price's good remarks on the abstract-fictional tendency of Cassirer's "form of thought of the Enlightenment" (*Cassirer on the Enlightenment*, esp. 108 ff.). Crocker has shown what substantive errors the linear construction of Hazard forces him into: he must place the crisis of the Enlightenment at its end, even though it accompanied it from the beginning (*Recent Interpretations*, 434). — Paradoxically, Gay adopts the above-mentioned critiques of Cassirer and Hazard (*Rise of Modern Paganism*, 426, 428) only to commit the same methodological and substantive errors himself. For he apparently wishes to interpret "the" Enlightenment as a precursor to modern philosophy of "critical rationalism," that is, from the standpoint of normativist premises. For him, Enlightenment is mainly critical thinking against the irrationality of myth and a striving for autonomy against Christian authority (464, 495 f.). That is actually the reason why he barely acknowledges the skeptical-nihilistic aspect of the Enlightenment (cf. his unrestrained polemic against Crocker and the very brief mention of Vyverberg's work, 427 f. and 449) and why he can see in the contradictions between the *philosophes* only the "complexity of synthesis" (p. X).

question of value, as it appears from the perspective of the relationship between spirit and sensuality, and the polemical character of thought (philosophical as much as political).

The expression "Age of Enlightenment," which we have used up to this point, is meant first of all to indicate that the Enlightenment does not coincide with its age, but rather takes place within it. The age is thus broader than the Enlightenment. At the same time, however, the Enlightenment is rooted in its age, which therefore would not have been what it was without it. The belonging of the Enlightenment to its age thus means two things: that it is characteristic of the age, and that it is conditioned by it. But since the age is multidimensional, and since the Enlightenment contains responses to various aspects of that age, it can no more be internally unified than it can be identical with its age. One must therefore draw a twofold distinction in order to delimit the scope of the Enlightenment: on the one hand, "Enlightenment" refers to those intellectual currents that seek to replace the traditional theological worldview with a secular one, or to explain the world in as immanent a manner as possible; and on the other hand—more narrowly—to those currents that defend a normative-moral ideal (whatever that may mean in each case) not only against traditional theology, but also against the skepticism and nihilism that arise in or from the very process of secularization. (Which aspects of reformed theology are to be counted among Enlightenment in the narrower sense, or are motivated by it, must be judged on a case-by-case basis.) It is absolutely necessary to recognize that an immanent explanation of the world—as opposed to a transcendent one, in which God was both an ontological and a normative-moral principle—is neither logically nor historically bound to the assumption of moral ideals. Nor does belief in the power of human reason eo ipso entail a commitment to a moral value system, since it remains open whether reason, in its essence, must be bound to such a system as it was in the Platonic-Aristotelian-Christian tradition,[22] or whether it can act in a value-neutral and instrumental-rational way. How central such elementary conceptual distinctions are will be demonstrated in the following analysis through several examples. Their function as guides consists, for now, in showing us the necessity of drawing the proper boundaries not only between the Age of Enlightenment and the Enlightenment,

22 See above, note 17.

but also between Enlightenment in the broader (negative, anti-theological) and in the narrower (positive, normativist) sense.[23] This work will not concern itself with the Age of Enlightenment as a whole, but with the Enlightenment in those two, often contradictory, meanings; the traditional theological opponent cannot be treated in detail, but must remain in the background, for only a sideways glance at it makes many of the actions and reactions of the heroes of the Enlightenment stage intelligible. What this age is in which the Enlightenment unfolds and thereby acquires its specific character can only be determined once we have a rough understanding of the nature and development of modern rationalism.[24]

The distinction between the three aforementioned levels by no means implies that the individual intellectual phenomena or thinkers of the Enlightenment era can be classified, without further differentiation, into three distinct groups. Take, for example, the level of Enlightenment in the moral-normativist sense: we find that its twofold opposition to traditional theology and to nihilistic tendencies gives rise to a multitude of intellectual formations, since, depending on the concrete situation, different—and sometimes significantly divergent—argumentative means are preferred in order to defend the guiding ideal. Even radical skepticism appears, for understandable reasons, in various nuances, i.e., not always as open nihilism. On the theological level, finally, a willingness emerges to adopt positions of

23 A fundamental distinction between the Enlightenment and its age is made by Diedmann, *Religiöse und metaphysische Elemente im Denken der Aufklärung*, in: *Studien*, 266, and: *Themen und Struktur ...*, in: *Diderot*, 15 f. However, he does not make our distinction between anti-theological and normativist Enlightenment, so that he cannot address the question of nihilism in the Enlightenment era in a logically satisfactory manner. For this it is not enough merely to state the coexistence of opposites in the 18th century (Diedmann discusses this ibid., 11 f., following Dilthey, *Friedrich der Große ...*, *Ges.Schr.* III, 97 ff., and Schalk, *Formen und Disharmonien ...*, esp. 254 f., 265, 267). The role of the light metaphor —derived from mythical-religious conceptions—in obscuring the contradictions among the *philosophes* has been examined by Delon, who also rightly points out that the existing contradictions in Enlightenment thought should not be interpreted merely according to a dualistic-Manichaean scheme —which, again, the light/darkness metaphor could encourage (*Les Lumières ...*, esp. 529 f., 533 f.).

24 See Ch. II, Sec. 1.

normativist Enlightenment, when one expects from such a tactic the disarming of Enlightenment opponents, or at least believes the concrete situation makes certain concessions indispensable for one's own survival. From all these tendencies arises a picture of utmost diversity, since this involves a multifaceted struggle across several levels at once. In fact, formally speaking, this constellation is by no means strange or unique. In every major epoch of intellectual history, once the initial enthusiasm that simplifies everything has passed, scholarship has gradually come to acknowledge the diversity of operative factors; this occurred, for example, with the two legends of humanism and the Renaissance, which helped the bourgeoisie to achieve a historically grounded self-consciousness.[25] To conceive of an epoch as a tension-filled coexistence of diverse—even contradictory—positions (regardless of whether a formal, retrospectively hermeneutic framework or overarching concept can be constructed to group some of these positions together) is in fact self-evident, once one brings to mind—first from a socio-historical perspective—the multitude of individuals and groups who in every era assert claims to power in their own way and thus inevitably come into conflict with one another, and further considers the function of thought-formations in concrete existential situations (i.e., without any flight into the realm of ideas). The tension-filled diversity of the epoch thus becomes self-evident, if one takes seriously the thesis of the polemical nature of thought and recognizes that every position necessarily calls forth a counter-position, indeed that every position arises as a counter-position. The struggle and the shifting alignments according to the friend-enemy distinction therefore explain the diversity in all major epochs of intellectual history—and the Enlightenment era is no exception. Even the unity that can be observed in certain fundamental questions within the ranks of the Enlightenment is no argument against the polemical function of thought, since it is itself polemically conditioned: it persists as long as a monolithic theological opponent stands in opposition,[26] and it crumbles the moment that opponent merely pretends to be

25 Cf. Rüegg, *Die Humanismusdiskussion*, 310 ff.; Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, 175 f., 181 ff., 199 ff.

26 Troeltsch already traced the only "relatively unified character" of the Enlightenment back to the common "struggle against ecclesiastical supernaturalism," *Die Aufklärung*, in: *Ges.Schr*. IV, 339.

slightly reform-minded. The fictitious or polemically conditioned character of the unity of the Enlightenment becomes evident when we scrutinize the common denominator upon which that unity rests. Concepts such as *reason* or *nature* are so ambiguous that subsuming the Enlightenment under them can only be done in a purely formal sense; to try to derive from them a substantive and binding essence of Enlightenment would be roughly equivalent to defining our own century as the age of democracy and freedom merely because all parties invoke those slogans. But precisely this shows that they are to be understood in a purely formal sense (or as empty formulas), which is further demonstrated by the fact that everyone who invokes them tends to add that what he means is the "true" reason or "true" freedom. Thus, not only in view of the diversity of intellectual currents in the age of Enlightenment, but also in light of the formal character of the slogans of normativist Enlightenment itself, the term *Enlightenment* is better understood as a conventional *terminus technicus*.[27] A fortiori this must be acknowledged when one has failed to strictly distinguish between the Enlightenment and its age.

The need for periodization undoubtedly stems from scholarly necessities, and it could not be eliminated even if one were to regard periodizations as a great evil. We are dependent on fictions and abstractions, and radical rebellion against them ultimately means that one cannot accept the nature of the human faculty of knowledge. Justifiably so, I would say—but it leads nowhere. In any case, the unavoidable fictions fulfill their hermeneutic function much better when one does not forget that they are indeed fictions. This must be all the more emphatically stressed in the interest of scholarly inquiry, since the necessity of periodization often results in a hypostatization of an epoch, which serves ideological purposes. Through it, a particular normativist conception is meant to be furnished with historical rights, i.e., grounded in "reality" itself, so that a given *ought* silently becomes an unquestionable *being*. The opposite also occurs: an entire epoch is demonized, so that a later one may seek and find its own self-affirmation in the struggle against it or in its "overcoming." The polemical nature of thought reveals itself not only when looking at the Enlightenment, but just as much when examining Enlightenment scholarship. What follows is a brief indication of some typical

27 Following a pointed suggestion by Belaval, *L'héritage Leibnizien*, 255.

misinterpretations ideologically conditioned. Here, of course, the ideological significance and effect of such interpretations is not to be denied, much less the right of those fighting on this or that front to formulate such readings. We do not want to—nor could we—keep these interpretations away from the grand politics of philosophy, but only, at most, from the scope of this investigation.

The mythology of liberalism first gave rise to the identification of the Enlightenment entirely with its moral-normativist version. The liberal conception of the Enlightenment can, if necessary, do without equating the Enlightenment with its historical era,[28] especially since it sees its own present-day justification in the continued existence of a still-dangerous "obscurantist" opponent; ideologically fatal for it, however, would be any fundamental separation of the Enlightenment understood as immanent world-explanation or the disenchantment of the world from certain ideals and slogans which, as we already noted, are neither logically nor intellectually-historically necessarily and always connected with it. The term "Enlightenment" therefore may never be used in liberal terminology as a mere *terminus technicus*—not only because of the aforementioned identification of Enlightenment with norms, but further because of the liberal belief that these norms are not merely formal and thus potentially non-binding in concrete situations, but that they possess an entirely self-evident content—namely, the one liberals happen to mean.[29] From the standpoint of liberalism's historical self-understanding, the gradual implementation

28 See Kant, who sometimes speaks of his own era as "an enlightened age" (*Prolegomena*, AA IV, 383), but elsewhere distinguishes between "an enlightened age" and an "age of Enlightenment" (*Was ist Aufklärung?*, AA VIII, 40). Cf. the good analysis by Stuke, *Aufklärung*, 265 ff.

29 A good example of this tendency is found in Cobban's book *In Search of Humanity*, passim. See the critical remarks by Crocker, *Recent Interpretations ...*, 452 f. In the spirit of modern liberalism, Funke also uses the concept of Enlightenment in his treatise: "Enlightenment – a question of moral attitude?" His remarks are meant only to show that the question mark in the title masks a rhetorical question. Beyond that, he identifies Enlightenment and the 18th century (p. 24 top), thereby simply ignoring intellectual-historical phenomena that do not fit the liberal-normativist framework. This unhistorical stance is typical of all those who, like Funke (see e.g. p. 33), find themselves ideologically close to so-called "critical rationalism"; cf. e.g. Mittelstrass, *Neuzeit und Aufklärung*, 87 ff.

of these norms appears as a self-evident, indispensable consequence of the detheologization of the worldview bound up with the detheologization of society—as the eternal gain of a humanity forever freed.[30] But this is a short-circuit in two respects: for it is entirely conceivable, first, that the detheologization of the worldview and society may serve norms (i.e., forms of domination) quite different from liberal ones (this possibility has, on a large part of our planet, become reality); or second, that a consistently carried out disenchantment of the world may arrive at relativistic or even nihilistic conclusions. For the liberal myth of the Enlightenment, it must be a bitter irony that modern nihilism found its first programmatic and consistent elaboration precisely in the Age of Enlightenment—above all through La Mettrie and de Sade. It is tempting to view such phenomena as deformities or blemishes.[31] Psychologically and ideologically, this may even be effective; nevertheless, the scholarly understanding of the Enlightenment must suffer from this, especially if it could be shown that such phenomena—and others like them—apart from their numerical strength, merely carry to completion tendencies also present among morally-inclined Enlighteners, and that these tendencies were deployed by them as weapons against traditional theology. Precisely this, however, must the liberal conception of the Enlightenment deny: namely, that the worldview-ontological presuppositions of its own norms (for example, the primacy of anthropology over theology, once it takes the form of radical atheism) could lead to the rejection of all norms whatsoever.

The Marxist (and Marxist-Leninist) interpretation of the Enlightenment must entangle itself in similar difficulties insofar as it focuses exclusively on the moral-normativist aspect of the Enlightenment era, which it views as the ideology of the bourgeoisie and takes at its word, in order thereby to be able to accuse the bourgeoisie of betraying its own original ideals.[32] The Enlightenment thus becomes the ideological banner of the rising bourgeoisie, which is taken down by the victorious and now conservative bourgeoisie. Marxism is now supposed to inherit the legacy of the Enlightenment

30 Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, 32.

31 Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*, II 375.

32 Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, in: *MEW* 20, 16 f. From a Marxist perspective, see also Besse, *Marx, Engels et le XVIIIe siècle français*, esp. 159 f., 162 ff.

and substantively realize those ideals that the bourgeoisie could proclaim only formally—even if in the name of all humanity. This interpretation invokes two successive conceptions of epoch. In other words, Marxism must regard the Enlightenment as a closed epoch because it sees itself as a movement that founds a new epoch—i.e., as a concept of epoch—which, in accordance with the staged schema of historical development, follows a previous and less complete one.[33] On the other hand, as an emancipatory movement, Marxism could never have inherited the legacy of bourgeois Enlightenment had it not been possible to identify that Enlightenment with certain fundamentally acceptable norms, even if the bourgeoisie had meant them only in a formal sense. From this results Marxism's double stance toward the Enlightenment: insofar as it understands itself as the surpasser of the Enlightenment, i.e., as the originator of a new, post-bourgeois epoch, it must identify the Enlightenment with the bourgeoisie; and insofar as it presents itself as the fulfiller of the Enlightenment, it must, of course, adopt the normativist (emancipatory) version of the Enlightenment as its own.[34]

33 Engels, *Die Lage Englands*, in: *MEW* 1, 550 f. Under the pressure to periodize in the Marxist schema of historical development, Krauss claims that although periodization based on the self-understanding of individual epochs is fundamentally impermissible, one must nonetheless make an exception in the case of the Enlightenment and take its (alleged) self-conception as a unified epoch of philosophy and progress at face value (*Zur Periodisierung der Aufklärung*, VIII; elsewhere Krauss even speaks not just of the Enlightenment's self-understanding but of that of the 18th century altogether, see *Siècle im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, 88 f.). Krauss, however, relies only on specific statements by Enlighteners of a particular (normativist) orientation, and thus his demonstration amounts to a tautology. Moreover, he overlooks that the systematic use of the Enlightenment as an epochal concept began only in the second half of the 19th century (Stuke, *Aufklärung*, 244 ff.), and that precisely at that time the Marxists discovered or constructed their double relationship to the "bourgeois Enlightenment" described above (Fetscher, *Aufklärung*, col. 451).

34 Here "Enlightenment" is effectively used as a transhistorical concept; cf. for example Leys' book, *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, which begins "Enlightenment" in the ancient river cultures and in Greece (I, 45 ff., 155 ff.). Characteristic of the emphasized kinship between the Marxist and liberal interpretations regarding the normativist understanding of Enlightenment is the fact that even "critical rationalists" speak of the "first," i.e., Greek

Both assumptions are untenable from a sociological and intellectual-historical perspective. Concerning the identification of Enlightenment and bourgeoisie, it fails to take into account the fact that—regardless of whether the rise of the bourgeoisie and the resulting displacement, to a greater or lesser extent, of the social power of the Church and theology created the conditions for the emergence of materialism and atheism—the bourgeoisie as a whole always regarded such tendencies with suspicion and rejection; it viewed them as harmful or compromising and preferred instead wavering dualistic positions. The sharp criticism by Voltaire, and even by Diderot, of materialists like La Mettrie and Helvétius is an expression of this bourgeois anxiety. Yet the Marxist interpretation regards precisely materialism as the truly revolutionary force within bourgeois Enlightenment—[35]a view tied to the materialist Marxism's self-understanding as the heir to the best traditions of that era. This brings us to the second of the above-mentioned assumptions, to which three counterpoints must be raised. First: if there were a necessary connection between materialism and "progressiveness"—not just in the anti-theological sense but, far more importantly here, in the moral-normativist sense—then it would have to be shown that materialists were *eo ipso* "more democratic" than other *philosophes*. This is not the case. Holbach, for example, is by no means more democratic than Voltaire, while conversely the democrat Rousseau passionately opposed materialism and atheism. Second: given the ideologically desired association between materialism and progressiveness—in the moral-normativist sense—the Marxist view must deny that materialists arrived at nihilistic positions (when it comes to La Mettrie, for instance,

Enlightenment (e.g. Mittelstrass, *Neuzeit und Aufklärung*, 15 ff., apparently following Gay, *Enlightenment*, 72 ff.; since both Gay, 207 ff., speaks of the "retreat of reason" and Mittelstrass, 76 ff., of the "disorientation of reason" during the "Middle Ages," there is evidently an implicit resurrection of the triadic schema of historical development. On the denigration of the "Middle Ages" as a topos of militant modern self-understanding, see Ch. II, note 5).

35 Engels, *Einleitung zur englischen Ausgabe der "Entwicklung des Sozialismus"*, in: *MEW* 22, 203. In the same argumentative vein, Krauss even goes so far as to make d'Alembert, for example, into a militant materialist: "The replacement of Voltaire by Diderot and d'Alembert [in the editorship of the *Encyclopédie*] marks the full victory of materialism in this preparatory work of bourgeois triumph" (*Einführung in das Studium der franz. Aufklärung*, in: *Studien*, 199).

the texts are simply distorted),[36] and conversely, skepticism must be treated as merely a preliminary stage of materialism.[37] Moreover, there is no inquiry into whether materialists who, on the level of social and moral philosophy, remain normativist, do so consistently—that is, in accordance with their metaphysical premises—or not. Third: since Marxism presents itself not only as the continuation but also as the surpassing of Enlightenment materialism, the latter must be labeled as incomplete, undialectical, or mechanistic, with the source of this mechanistic character said to be Descartes' philosophy of nature.[38] However, our analysis will show that 18th-century materialism only became possible on the basis of rejecting Cartesian mechanism.[39]

The debate over the influence of Enlightenment ideas on the outbreak and course of the French Revolution was likewise conducted largely under polemical premises. This becomes evident when we recall the very first statements on the subject, which, moreover, came from individuals who were more or less directly involved. The Revolution was treated as a necessary consequence, even the culmination of the Enlightenment—both by revolutionaries, who wished to see their cause understood not as a prosaic struggle for power but as a noble fight for noble ideas,[40] and by conservatives or reactionaries who had already fought against Enlightenment ideas and therefore saw in the "cruelty" of the Revolution nothing but the confirmation of their warnings against those ideas, or who, in their (un)willing blindness to deeper causes, wished to place the primary responsibility for events on a handful of ideologues.[41] This form of

36 See Ch. VII, note 68. The claim by Marx and Engels (*Die Heilige Familie*, in: *MEW* 2, 138) that the materialists taught the "original goodness" of man is demonstrably false, at least in the case of La Mettrie and Helvétius.

37 Engels on Hume, *Die Lage Englands*, in: *MEW* 1, 553; cf. Engels, *L. Feuerbach ...*, in: *MEW* 21, 276; cf. Engels, *Einl. zur engl. Ausg. der "Entwicklung des Sozialismus"*, in: *MEW*, 22, 295 f.

38 Marx–Engels, *Die Heilige Familie*, in: *MEW*, 2, 132 f. (cf. Engels, in: *MEW* 22, 303).

39 See Ch. IV, Sec. 4 b.

40 Brissot formulated it as follows: "notre révolution n'est pas le fruit d'une insurrection, c'est l'ouvrage d'un demi-siècle de Lumières. Les Lumières ont fondé la Liberté etc.", *Le Patriote Français*, 10 Oct. 1791, 426 (quoted in Trenard, *Lumières et Révolution*, 10).

41 One of the first was Burke, *Reflections*, 211 f. On conspiracy theory more

polemic lasted a long time and had prominent advocates on both sides,[42] but it was gradually overlaid—or rather merged—with another, which concerned broader historical or, more precisely, philosophy-of-history questions. In order to monopolize the Revolution and elevate it to the level of their own glorious tradition, historians from the liberal bourgeoisie hypostatized the Revolution,[43] and in this they were followed by Marxist historiography, which had an interest in a hypostatized "bourgeois" revolution to support its schema of history as an ascending sequence of stages. With regard to this hypostatization of the Revolution, which is elevated into a kind of *personnage métaphysique*,[44] both the liberal and the Marxist interpretations display the same partial and only seemingly paradoxical agreement as they do in the question of the Enlightenment —which, incidentally, is to be expected, since on both sides one's stance toward the Revolution essentially shapes one's stance toward the Enlightenment, or vice versa. Just as the concrete diversity of the age must be set against the hypostatized Enlightenment, so too must the Revolution, as a concrete and multilayered event, be set against the hypostatized Revolution of both the aforementioned positions. There is no such thing as *the* Revolution, but rather a series of revolutions that not only follow one another but also unfold alongside one another and pursue distinct aims.[45] The fact that the massive upheavals that are usually lumped together under the name "French Revolution"

generally, see Epstein, *Ursprünge des Konservativismus*, 583 ff.

42 Taine ("Plusieurs millions de sauvages sont ainsi lancés par quelques milliers de parleurs," *Les Origines ...* II 351, cf. II, 77 f.: *La Propagation de la Doctrine*) and to some extent Tocqueville (*L'Ancien Régime*, III, 1 = *Œuvres* II, 193 ff.) may be seen as successors to Burke. Mignet, on the other hand, shares Brissot's view (*Histoire de la Rév. Française*, *Introduction*, V = I, 55 ff.).

43 Gouch, *Geschichte und Geschichtsschreiber im 19. Jahrhundert*, 200 f., 213 ff.

44 Following an apt expression by Furet, *Le catéchisme révolutionnaire*, 279. Furet rightly criticizes the teleological conception of the origin and course of the Revolution and notes that it is especially for Marxist interpretations "un peu paradoxale" to judge based on the self-understanding of the actors of the time (262 f.; cf. above, note 33).

45 Above all, Lefebvre has emphasized both the multiplicity of revolutions and the independent or anti-bourgeois character of the peasant movement, *La Révolution française et les paysans*, in: *Études*, esp. 248, 250, 260. Cf. Furet, *Le catéchisme*, 282 f. and Cobban, *Aspects of the French Revolution*, 22 ff.

ultimately benefited the bourgeoisie (and we must not forget that in France, unlike the ruling class in England, the bourgeoisie had to share its victory with independently revolting peasants) does not in itself entitle us to label these upheavals as a bourgeois revolution *tout court*. Otherwise, a metaphysical-teleological mode of interpretation prevails, and the historian becomes, in the words of Fr. Schlegel, a retrospective prophet.

This first abstraction, which lies in the hypostatization of the Revolution, immediately suggests a second—namely, the hypostatization of the Enlightenment—and ultimately adds a third: if the Revolution is as unified as the Enlightenment, then the former appears derivable from the latter, at least ideologically (for a historian with an extremely idealist mindset, even really). It is astonishing and at the same time amusing to observe how similarly—though with reversed signs—a systematizing Marxism and an anti-Marxist, anti-materialist emphasis on the role of ideas in the Revolution proceed in this matter. For the former, the share of Enlightenment literature in the Revolution can be "substantial enough,[46]" on the methodological condition, however, that Enlightenment thought is reconstructed in such a way that its main currents more or less correspond to those of the Revolution; thus, in the first phase of the Revolution, the ideological field is supposed to be dominated by the political theory of pure bourgeois Enlightenment, and in the Jacobin phase by Rousseauism.[47] Not fundamentally different is the representation offered by scholars who, in opposition to attempts to explain the Revolution primarily in politico-sociological rather than intellectual terms, wish to assert the importance of Enlightenment ideas.[48] In both

46 Thus Krauss, *Einführung*, in: *Studien*, 201.

47 Volguine, *L'idéologie révolutionnaire en France*, 217 f. Volguine develops a mechanistic conception according to the orthodox Marxist schema: the theoretical work of the ideologues is followed by the practical-political fermentation, and in this, the work of the Enlighteners contributes significantly to the formation of the "mass" revolutionary consciousness (206, 213). How this process concretely unfolded, however, remains unclear.

48 Peyre's attempt in this direction rests on two mistaken assumptions: that France before 1789 lived in relative prosperity—hence the unrest could allegedly have had only ideological reasons—and that the Revolution falls into two phases dominated by the principles of Montesquieu and Rousseau. (*The Influence of Eighteenth Century Ideas*, 72 f., 77). As for the first point, one can

cases, there must be a (the same) correspondence between historical process and ideology, entirely regardless of which of the two factors is granted primacy. And in both cases, the fiction of "the" Revolution becomes a genuine *obstacle épistémologique* when it comes to achieving a concrete understanding of the Enlightenment.[49]

The impact of ideas during the revolutionary period in France can only be assessed properly if one radically clears away not only ideologically driven constructions like those just mentioned, but also certain related and by now almost self-evident assumptions about the historical function of ideas in general. The effect of ideas is not to be understood in a linear fashion—that is, as the attempt to apply ideas that someone has read in books, otherwise learned, or even thought up themselves. To argue on this level is scientifically unproductive; it is, in fact, the surest path to falling into a teleological mode of thinking. The attempt to apply ideas takes place within struggle, and by people who are struggling—and struggle has its own logic, to which the logic of texts or pre-formed convictions must submit if they are to remain in play at all. That ideas have an effect means only that certain people appeal to them; not ideas in their initial virginity move those inspired by them, but people situated in concrete circumstances make use of certain ideas—ideas they are at least partly familiar with—which, however, must either be selectively emphasized or reinterpreted anew. Put differently: ideas become effective precisely because they are used in situations that are not the product of ideas, but rather existential-

generally argue—apart from the obvious reference to the great famine of 1789—that social (not merely ideological) tensions do not necessarily arise in moments of greatest distress; regarding the mentioned division of the Revolution, it not only neglects the variety of concrete events, but also reveals a mechanistic understanding of the effect of ideas: that Rousseau was also used by aristocrats (see above, note 50) is, for example, not mentioned. Instead of being treated as weapons after the outbreak of the Revolution, Peyre treats ideas as forces determining its course. Yet he himself cites (73) Desmoulins' statement that before 1789 there were not even ten republicans in all of France.

49 The expression comes from Gusdorf, *Les principes de la pensée*, 22. The same thesis was ingeniously developed by Goulemot, who emphasizes that viewing the entirety of the Enlightenment from the perspective of the Revolution permits only a teleological and Manichaean conception of it. Equally correct is his remark that Enlightenment and bourgeoisie cannot be wholly or self-evidently identified. (*De la Polémique sur la Révolution ...*, esp. 238, 239 ff.).

political seriousness in the purest sense of the word; the seriousness of the situation makes the effect of ideas a serious matter. This is also the reason why effective ideas cannot choose either the domain or the circumstances of their effect in accordance with the above-mentioned linear schema. In other words, they cannot determine in advance their respective interpreters, nor the form and purpose of their respective appearance. They are, first of all, merely available weapons; who will use them, and when and how, does not depend on them—and for this reason, the history of their effect, indeed their own history, is essentially only the history of their interpretations. Without the interpretation of an idea in a concrete situation—without the interpreting combatant—there is no effect of ideas. This is the premise from which a scientific understanding of their effect must begin. For straightforward idealist or materialist conceptions of history, it must remain a mystery how it was possible that Rousseau, the favorite of the Jacobins, could have ideologically served the conservatives.[50] One may, of course, speak here of "misuse," etc., but this could be said of any party—think, for instance, of the Jacobin terror—and in any case such moralistic-nostalgic questions do not take us much further. Nonetheless, the relatively free interpretability of ideas in situations of struggle is a key to understanding their function as weapons and thus also their effect—and at the same time forms the strongest argument against both a materialist theory of reflection (*Widerspiegelungstheorie*) and against the various versions of the idealist primacy of intellectual history (i.e., of the "spiritual" in history).

This insight into the extremely plastic function of ideas, which are used as weapons in the seriousness of a situation, might help clarify why the observation of their effect before and during the revolutionary period does not constitute an argument against the thesis that Enlightenment ideas, in themselves, could never have set the revolutionary upheaval in motion. On the contrary: it is only the outbreak of the Revolution that made their revolutionary effect inevitable—but only in those interpretations dictated by the respective

50 ee the excellent study by McDonald, *Rousseau and the French Revolution*, which also makes good remarks regarding the effect, rediscovery, and reinterpretation of ideas (3 ff., 20 f., 115 f., 155). See also Sozzi, *Interpretations de Rousseau*, esp. 190, 199 f., 205 ff., 217 f., 223; Barny, *Rousseau dans la Révolution*, esp. 65, 74 f., 83, 96.

combat situation. The complex of the French Revolution after 1789 must therefore be explained in social-historical, not intellectual-historical, terms.[51] It is one thing whether certain Enlightenment ideas could trigger a revolution, and another whether some—indeed, many—revolutionaries had to fall back on those ideas. The latter was, incidentally, quite natural already due to the—social-historically explainable!—role played by elements of the new, especially petty-bourgeois intelligentsia in the events after 1789. One should therefore rather ask how the bearers of certain ideas came into being, than conversely, how these ideas found their champions. If the latter were the case, then the (fictive) average of Enlightenment ideas would have had to coincide with the (fictive) average of the Revolution's social content. According to the explicitly political-social demands of the predominant bourgeois Enlightenment, the Revolution would have ended already on the night of August 4, 1789—since neither Robespierre nor Napoleon were envisioned in that framework—on the contrary. The fate of the immediate collaborators and pupils of the Encyclopédistes is the best proof of this.[52] The revolutionary period, however, developed a wholly distinct and enormous dynamism, which, tellingly, was due not least to the fact that masses entered the stage who only then began to hear of Enlightenment ideas.[53] Precisely within the revolutionary dynamism, certain Enlightenment ideas—interpreted according to the needs of the concrete situation and deployed as weapons—found their own momentum. This should really be self-evident, so long as one avoids any hypostatization of "the" Enlightenment or "the" Revolution.

I would like to conclude this brief overview of the polemically and ideologically driven misinterpretations of the Enlightenment era with a reference to an intellectual current that emerged early throughout Europe—and found a particularly characteristic expression

51 Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles*, 440 ff., 469 ff. See, *The Economic and Social Origins*, 13. In his review of Mornet's book (366 ff.), Lefebvre makes important remarks about the shortcomings of a purely intellectual-historical approach, although he fundamentally accepts the author's findings.

52 Kafker, *Les Encyclopédistes et la Terreur*, 295; Mortier, *Les Héritiers des "Philosophes"*, esp. 55.

53 Lefebvre, *Foules révolutionnaires*, 3 f., 13 ff.; Rude, *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, 199 ff.

in Germany. It concerns the identification of Enlightenment rationalism with intellectualism, whereby the former is accused of suppressing "life" and the "living" in man in favor of abstract schemata. Our analysis will show that the Enlightenment as a whole was not only not intellectually oriented, but in fact developed—at least in part—in opposition to Cartesian intellectualism. However, the charge of intellectualism was levelled wholesale against the Enlightenment, since it was a way of attacking certain of its substantive positions. It was therefore no coincidence that it was primarily the opponents of the Revolution—who saw the roots of the evil in the Enlightenment—who denounced its alleged intellectualism.[54] In Germany, this kind of critique also found a hearing among (cautious) friends of the Revolution,[55] especially as the main current of the German late Enlightenment, which followed the decline of Wolffianism and the *Sturm und Drang* movement, was for specific reasons linked with a decidedly anti-intellectualist tendency and often sought its national identity in a proud distancing from French "shallowness.[56]" National consciousness and opposition to the allegedly intellectualist Enlightenment thus frequently went hand in hand. This attitude was understandably formative for leading thinkers of the Restoration period,[57] survived intact through the 19th century, and even enjoyed a renaissance in the 20th. For example, the effects of the clique of aestheticizing bombast surrounding Stefan George, which spread especially in the period between the two world wars, were disastrous for the scholarly understanding of the Enlightenment. Nationalistically-minded proponents and fellow travelers of this

54 Burke, *Reflections*, 156; Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, chap. VI–VII = *Œuvres*, col. 49, 54.

55 See, for example, Humboldt's remarks on the arbitrariness of Enlightenment-revolutionary reason in his *Ideen einer Staatsverfassung* from the year 1791 = *Werke* I, 35 f. This type of critique culminates in Hegel's depiction of "absolute freedom and terror" (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Werke* II, 441 ff.), after it had already found a metaphysically grounded formulation in Hölderlin's *Hyperion* (cf. Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 338 f., 357 ff.).

56 See, for example, Humboldt's analysis of the French national character compared to the German, *Das 18. Jahrhundert*, in: *Werke* I, 448 f., 456 f. Herder denies the French any capacity for metaphysics or for higher (not merely "rationalizing") thinking at all (*Journal* = *Werke* IV, 416).

57 Documentation in Stuke, *Aufklärung*, 323 f.

current—drawing on older Lebensphilosophie positions and familiar polemics against the "Western spirit" from the fiercely belligerent years 1914–18,[58] even among prominent scholars—believed they saw the "essence of the German spirit" in the overcoming of the "cold" or "shallow" rationalism of the West. This was meant, quite obviously, as the ideological revenge of a Germany humiliated at Versailles and in the Ruhr. In the process, rationalism was defined so narrowly that the concept became nearly meaningless, while the polemic against it became correspondingly easier. That Kant and Fichte were no less German than Goethe and Herder was either forgotten or not interpreted thoroughly enough. It was also overlooked that the so-called reaction against rationalism in fact absorbed essential elements of that same rationalism.[59] During the National Socialist period, this view of the Enlightenment gained further currency for obvious reasons,[60] only to nearly vanish after the Second World War and the subsequent triumph of the liberal-Enlightenment or Marxist-Enlightenment ideologies of the victors in both parts of present-day Germany. Our recollection of this current, however, is not purely historical in intent, but aims to demonstrate, through a typical example, that such widespread assumptions—like the direct or indirect identification of rationalism with intellectualism—are not to be taken at face value, as they stem from polemical motives. A scholarly clarification of this question, however, is itself impossible without a fundamental discussion of the concept of rationalism.

3. Rationalism and Irrationalism

58 See the anthology edited and introduced by K. Böhme: *Aufrufe und Reden ...*, passim. Cf. Lübbe, *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland*, 171 ff., esp. 205 ff.

59 It is to E. Cassirer's credit that he emphasized this, within the context of a fundamental rejection of the legend of the one-sided intellectualist character of the Enlightenment. See, for example, his remarks on the relationship between romantic historicism and the Enlightenment, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 253 ff.

60 Typical passages in Korff, *Geist der Goethezeit* I, 24 ff.; Böhm, *Anti-Cartesianismus* 42 ff., 77 ff., 129 ff., 235 ff.; Hildebrandt, *Hölderlin*, 35 ff.; Scheibe, *Die Krisis der Aufklärung*, 4, 30, 33 ff., 53 f.

The obscurity surrounding such central concepts as "rationalism" constitutes another considerable obstacle on the path to an appropriate understanding of the Enlightenment, especially since it has so often been labeled a rationalist age. This obscurity, however, is precisely a result of the exceedingly frequent use of the concept of rationalism in inevitably different contexts and the ambiguity that arises from it. But it would be naïve to want to eliminate this obscurity or ambiguity once and for all through terminological conventions. For the respective use of the concept of rationalism is usually too organically tied to the substantive intentions of a given thinker for that thinker to be willing to forgo his personal nuance of the term—and thereby give up more or less essential points of his theory. The linking of rationalism to a specific content and to specific theses is in fact one of the most important weapons in philosophical polemic and politics. It aims to make the very capacity for logical use of thought dependent on the acceptance of theories of a certain content, and to portray those who do not wish to accept these theories as opponents of logical thinking itself, or as bad or unreliable thinkers. It is because of this polemical use of the term "rationalism" that it has become so ambiguous, since it has repeatedly been coupled with the most diverse substantive theses; we reveal no secret in pointing out the elementary —though seldom acknowledged by philosophers—fact that logically operating thought has served extremely divergent views and intentions. Let it be left to the champions of one theory or another not only to challenge their opponent's theses, but also—pathetically, and in the name of the one Reason (which curiously always coincides with their own)—to question their opponent's very ability to think logically. A genuinely understanding perspective cannot take sides in such a dispute if it wishes to remain understanding at all. It must therefore seek a definition of rationalism that is not substantive, but consistently formal, and that would offer a schema applicable to any rationalism, regardless of content. There is no other path if one does not wish to commit the absurdity of declaring Thomas Aquinas less rationalist than Hobbes, or Machiavelli less rationalist than Kant (serious reflection on these and similar examples suffices to make clear the senselessness—in purely scholarly, not ideological terms—of tying

rationalism to specific contents of thought).

Rationalism would therefore, for us, be the purposeful, formally logically sound use of the argumentative means available to thought for the justification of a fundamental stance. This definition implies that the fundamental stance or decision itself lies beyond logical justification, even if it is considered proven from the standpoint of militant rationalists: for that is ultimately the aim of tying rationalism to a particular content. Only the rationalization of the fundamental stance can be carried out logically consistently, and therefore only it can be open to scholarly debate—not the fundamental stance itself: for the answering of ultimate questions takes place through acts of authority. There can thus be as many kinds of logical consistency as there are fundamental stances; although the logical means, formally speaking, remain the same, they each serve to rationalize substantively different fundamental decisions. Now, since these lie *ultra rationem*, they must by their nature be described as mystical, which in turn implies the thesis that the mystical is not the opposite but rather the source or the beginning of rational effort. In regard to the answering of ultimate questions, the distinction between rational and irrational completely loses its significance; this distinction must therefore be restricted to the level of the conceptual elaboration or rationalization of the fundamental decision—especially since the decision in favor of reason itself lies *ultra rationem*. Only on this level can there be a direct opposition between the rational and the irrational. The mystical, which stands at the beginning of the intellectual effort and forms its emotional source, is of course also irrational, yet this mystical-irrational must be strictly distinguished from the logically irrational. Since for us the criterion of the rational lies in the consistency of formally logical thinking in the elaboration of a fundamental stance, the rational stands not in opposition to the mystical-irrational, but only to the logically irrational. In other words, the mystical-irrational lies on a deeper level than both the rational and the logically irrational, which stand on the same level and can therefore contend with each other. Because of this difference in levels, one must not confuse the mystical-irrational source of thought with its execution, nor infer the rationality of the one from the rationality of the other—and conversely: one must not interpret logical irrationality as an effect of the mystical-irrational. From our perspective, then, only the logically irrational—not the

mystical-irrational—is the opposite of rationalism. This explains why religious systems of thought cannot be regarded as opponents of rationalism *as such*; conflict arises only between these systems and certain content-defined forms of rationalism, which, however, does not imply any fundamental difference in terms of the rationality of the two: for non-religious rationalisms are no less hostile to one another than religious ones are to non- or anti-religious ones.

In any overall assessment of the previous confrontations between rationalism and irrationalism, the purely polemical element within them should not be overlooked; since depending on the era and the individuals involved, sometimes the rational, sometimes the irrational serves as a reproach, scholarly research must not take such statements at their nominal value. Our schema shows why the strict opposition between rationalism and irrationalism is objectively inappropriate—provided only that the mystical-irrational and the logically-irrational are properly distinguished from one another. If the former lies beyond logical justification, then the latter is in reality a much rarer phenomenon than rationalists—who present their own rationalism as the only possible one—would have us believe. By logically-irrational I do not merely mean the violation of formal logical rules (since this also occurs among rationalists), but rather—and above all—the fundamental refusal to transform the mystical-irrational into a rational system, or to rationalize one's own fundamental stance. In my view, this refusal is primarily polemical in nature—that is, it serves to defend certain substantive positions that appear to be threatened by the process of rationalization as such. The struggle against thinking does not in fact target thinking *as such*, but rather the connection of thinking with particular contents—a connection that, in certain times, becomes so dominant that those contents appear to emerge from the mere use of thinking itself.

Apart from this negative or circumstantially fluctuating character, the other major weakness of logical irrationalism lies in the fact that its decision against the rationalization of the fundamental stance it defends can hardly be realized. From the standpoint of rationalism, of course, nothing can be reproached to this decision, yet it inevitably becomes entangled in contradictions as soon as it attempts to articulate itself argumentatively. The consistently logically irrational is precisely for this reason difficult to pin down, because its

proponents never actually renounce the attempt to communicate their position argumentatively. Without this communication, their position would be unknown and therefore entirely irrelevant; polemic against the opponent labeled as a rationalist would be impossible, and likewise irrationalism itself would be impossible insofar as it becomes conscious of itself only in this polemic. Renouncing argumentation in one form or another would thus mean renouncing polemic and thereby practical non-existence. Since people must wage their battles with one another not least on the field of ideas, an irrational stance in the sense of a programmatic and total renunciation of justification (for behavior or for communicable and thus practically relevant ideas) is simply impossible under the conditions of a society that is, at whatever level, always organized and based on norms and ideologies—I even dare to assert the thesis that society, directly or symbolically, lays the tracks for the rationalization of fundamental stances, indeed demands it, since only in this way can it bring the behavior of its members under control (this ought to apply *a fortiori* to militant groups: I remind you of the ongoing struggles of the Church against the apologists of pure mystical-irrationalism, as well as of orthodox Marxism against its utopian-sentimentalist fellow travelers). The irrationalists make a serious mistake when they attempt to separate the existential source of thought—which they rightly place beyond argumentatively developed thinking—from its outflow, or when they suspect in thought a foreign element: but this source can only generate thought, and if it does not, then it simply remains silent and is forgotten. That is how things stand within social organization, whose essence is *ratio*, or the rationalization and channeling of fundamental stances. This connection, moreover, explains why protests against *ratio* very often amount to an open rejection of culture as such. Yet here too the irrationalists fall into new contradictions, because they are compelled to use a rationalized value scale: they attribute special merits to that which they see suppressed by *ratio*; the suppressed is said to be the genuine and the natural, and therefore it possesses a higher and deeper rationality (the word "rationality" here acquires a morally nuanced sense, and we shall see what an important role this played in the Enlightenment).

Aside from the fact that the existence of feelings wholly foreign to any attempt at self-rationalization or self-justification could be doubted within social organization, the protests of the irrationalists are

already futile for the simple reason that the mystical-irrational in reality never disappears, but constantly passes over into the rational in order to animate it from within. This transition and this transubstantiation are, as noted, unavoidable within culture—something which becomes apparent not least in the often logically very sophisticated chains of reasoning employed by the irrationalists themselves. Irrationalism can therefore only be a more or less rationalized irrationalism, or a reluctant rationalism, if it is to be relevant and if it hopes to conduct its polemic—however motivated—against its opponent branded as a rationalist with any prospect of success. *Ratio* remains the sharpest weapon—and how could it be otherwise, since man has always seen in *ratio* his greatest pride or consolation, namely, his superiority over the animals? In our sense, then, rationalism is effectively omnipresent and omnipotent, and yet our thesis, by the logic of its own grounding, does not amount to a gain for humanism or moralism, which rely on the power of reason. The struggles between rationalists themselves—which in intensity do not fall short of those between irrationalists—are in themselves sufficient proof for anyone willing to see without bias that rationalism as such cannot offer any shared basis of understanding, precisely because of the nature we have just described, namely, its rootedness in a fundamental stance. Out of the despair this realization tends to provoke, rationalists attempt to escape by binding their rationalism to specific substantive positions. But the very act of establishing a supposedly binding rationalism only serves to provoke opposition from differently minded rationalists or irrationalists—and thus only contributes to perpetuating the very condition it intended to overcome.

This critical analysis does not intend to pave the way for a new, this time the "true," concept of rationalism, but rather to provide criteria that will allow for a scientifically value-free consideration to describe historically given forms of rationalism in their opposition to corresponding forms of irrationalism, both structurally and functionally. With regard to what follows, two points are above all to be emphasized: a) that each particular form of rationalism stands under the sign of a worldview-based fundamental stance or decision, which itself lies *ultra rationem* and is based on ultimate value judgments; b) that each particular rationalism, by virtue of its rootedness in a fundamental stance or decision, is *eo ipso* bound to a

specific content which it is precisely meant to rationalize. This content is more decisive for the general intellectual-historical character of the respective rationalism than the choice of the faculty said to carry the *ratio*. That is to say: rationalism and intellectualism are by no means necessarily bound together—an implicit or explicit assumption widespread in most prior comprehensive characterizations of the Enlightenment, which has caused much confusion. It is precisely here that the relevance of our analysis of the concept of rationalism for the concrete understanding of the Enlightenment movement comes to light. As will be shown, the fundamental character of the Enlightenment is best understood if we consider its rationalism in its binding to certain contents on the one hand, and in its (related) distinction from—indeed opposition to—intellectualism on the other hand: an opposition that itself implies something specific with regard to the redefinition of the relationship between spirit and sensuality. Of course, there is also intellectually-oriented rationalism in the age of Enlightenment, but it does not dominate the picture. In order to outline this picture accurately—that is, in order to find the greatest possible common denominator that allows us to speak of a unified image at all, and to undertake an intellectual-historical placement of the Enlightenment movement based, not least, on its conception of rationalism—it is necessary to determine precisely which contents the latter is bound to, or which it cannot bypass, and to which it must respond, whether positively or negatively. The unity of the Enlightenment, thus elastically conceived, can again be ideally typified through its polemical demarcation from previous, more or less unified phases of modern rationalism in general.

From all this, our working program emerges. We must first define what is specific to modern rationalism in general—as the common framework within which different fundamental tendencies unfold—in order to thereby enable ourselves to grasp, comparatively and in contrast, what is specific to the Enlightenment, likewise as the common denominator of various possible directions. This does not, however, mean that the Enlightenment as a whole distinguishes itself qualitatively from the earlier structures of modern rationalism. On the contrary: analysis of the latter will show that in the age of the Enlightenment, only certain tendencies of modern rationalism come to the fore—tendencies that were present alongside others from the

beginning and, as such, existed in various more or less pure forms long before the 18th century—so that an overall interpretation of the Enlightenment cannot do without a general discussion of modern rationalism, and in fact has so far proven to be extremely deficient, if not outright mistaken. In this ideal-typical development of what is specific to the Enlightenment, we must also apply the conceptual tools developed in this introductory chapter and ask each time the concrete questions: What is the content of the respective rationalism, especially with regard to the problem of the relationship between spirit and sensuality in its entanglement with the problem of value? Against which opponent is this content directed, and how can it be understood and reconstructed from out of that opposition?

CHAPTER TWO

Early Thought-Structures of Modern Rationalism

1. Concept of Modern Rationalism. The Double Meaning of the Rehabilitation of Sensuality and the Suspicion of Nihilism

The view of rationalism in its relationship to the mystical-irrational, as outlined earlier, in my opinion holds undeniable value from the perspective of intellectual history. It frees scholarly consideration from the widespread and self-congratulatory prejudice that the modern era is *the* epoch of rationalism par excellence (the self-congratulation here takes an easy route: it presumes the superiority of a particular style of thinking, while deriving the very standards of this evaluation from that style itself), and only thereby does it enable us to pose the question of what is specific about modern rationalism. From unambiguous statements by its greatest representatives, it is clear that modern rationalism defines itself primarily in opposition to what is labeled as "Scholasticism," "Authority," "the Middle Ages," "Mysticism"; in other words, its polemical character manifests in its constant, direct or indirect invocation of an opponent whenever it seeks to present or justify itself. Since, in this sense, it lives from opposition (even today: "positivism" against "metaphysics"), it makes an effort to maintain this very basis of nourishment; it does so by pointing to the ever-threatening danger posed by the multifaceted or adaptable and yet persistently identical opponent. This is the indirect side of the polemic, which—paradoxically, but necessarily—consists in inflating the enemy, while the direct side is articulated in the persistence with which rationality (at least "true" rationality) is denied to that enemy. In reality, however, the rationality of the opponent is simply not acknowledged—or not even perceived—because it stands in the service of a fundamentally different worldview or fundamental stance. Important epistemological and scientific-theoretical oppositions are side effects of this struggle over worldviews, and presuppose it

logically (the individual questions only acquire meaning within a broader overall perspective) and psychologically. Whether modern rationalism, along with all its scientific achievements, appears from a certain theological-metaphysical standpoint as a disastrous hubris or as the work of the devil,[61] it is in turn by no means more inclined—for as long as it insists on its claim to ideological supremacy and refuses to let science, presented as redemptive power, be turned into the epistemic instrument of a skeptical-nihilistic contemplation—to grant the opponent any generosity or to recognize anything rational in their intellectual production; the centuries-long struggle against "Scholasticism" has now been followed by the struggle against the "false prophets."

It is, however, not even necessary to play the role of *advocatus diaboli* (which today often means the same as *advocatus Dei*) in order to defend the striking rationality of theological-religious or metaphysical-philosophical theories—that is, the formally logical consistency of thought within them, and at the same time their fundamental belief in the value of the scope of thinking—against the attacks of modern demonologists. Medieval philosophy essentially begins with Augustine's decision in favor of Platonic rationalism, the purpose of which was precisely to eliminate the relativism lurking in becoming and in sensuality through the science of a thought rooted in the *ὄν*—a motive that, moreover, was by no means lost even within the Thomistic elevation of experience.[62] If, in turn, one wished to understand rationalism as belief in the power of thought *per se*, one would be hard-pressed to find a more impressive expression of it than the ontological proof of God (Hegel's late return to it—precisely in the name of the modern principle of thought—eloquently attests to this). The decisive difference, then, lies neither in the evaluation of the capacities of thought nor in the recognition of the necessity of employing it; medieval philosophy even surpasses its modern rival in this regard by declaring the intellect capable not only of opinions but of knowing the very essence of the world. The ultimate guarantee for this, however, is the divine intellect—not in the sense that it leads the human one like a blind man by the hand, but rather in the sense that

61 See the typical statements of theologically minded thinkers compiled by Willey, *Seventeenth Century Background*, 14 f.

62 Gilson, *Esprit de la phil. méd.*, 235 ff.

God is the guarantor of the fixed order of being and therefore also of the firmness or security of its apprehension.[63] It is against this worldview, fundamentally, that modern rationalism struggles; it wants and must dissolve the binding of the human intellect to such a fixed ontological framework (which, moreover, was meant to ideologically sustain concrete forms of domination) in order to even be able to define this intellect in accordance with the new tasks assigned to it within another worldview—or to elevate it to the status of principle. The polemical interest of both sides does not revolve around the question of whether thinking is employed by one and not the other, but solely around the question of what thinking is employed for, and which worldview-based fundamental stance underlies its use—and simultaneously its definition, which cannot be separated from its use.

The detachment of intellectual activity from the former ontological-metaphysical framework thus constitutes, in the eyes of modern rationalism, the precondition for rational thinking—or for a kind of thinking that "truly" deserves that name.[64] In this fundamental

63 Op. cit. 249 ff. As Bonaventure formulated it: "Cognitio certitudinalis esse non potest, nisi sit ex parte scibilis immutabilitas, et infallibilitas ex parte scientis" [Certain knowledge cannot exist unless there is immutability on the part of the knowable, and infallibility on the part of the knower], *Quaest. Disp., De Scient. Christi* Qu. IV Concl. (= *Opera* V, 23). Cf. Thomas, *Quaest. Disp., De Potentia*, Qu. VII Art. IX (= II, 275 f.); also *Summ. Theol.* Qu. I Art. V ad 1.

64 The assumption is superficial that in the modern age the actual drive behind curiosity is "the movement of inquiry and searching itself and as such" (thus Blumenberg, *Legitim. der Neuzeit*, 207). Blumenberg, seeking to prove the intellectual independence of modernity and thus also the superiority of the style of thinking he favors, must naturally overlook the worldview-laden decision that first made the modern attitude toward the question of theoretical curiosity possible: the latter was only set in motion by the assumption that (also) other objects than the divine are capable of rational comprehension or worthy of more intensive attention. There is no such thing as curiosity in itself, only specific curiosity felt by concrete people under concrete circumstances. That representatives of modern rationalism, whose self-understanding Blumenberg adopts without historical or psychological reservation, indeed share, wished to present curiosity as an absolute magnitude is not merely an Aristotelian reminiscence, but a polemical argument by which the anthropologically framed right of the individual to detach their own thinking from the theological frame of reference was to be asserted. (The argument even implies the highly aggressive thesis that one should or may prefer any—even

polemical reference to a worldview, modern rationalism precisely appears as a *weltanschauliche* (worldview-based) fundamental stance. It is now necessary to strictly distinguish between rationalism as a *weltanschauliche* fundamental stance and rationalism as its logically-argumentative elaboration. As will become evident, the intellectual rationalization of the rationalist *weltanschauung* can proceed along various diverging paths—which means nothing other than that worldview-rationalism has taken the form of several philosophical theories. From our perspective, this is completely understandable, since, as already mentioned, the rationalization of a *weltanschauliche* stance is bound only by formal-logical, not by substantive constraints. The *weltanschauliche* stance—which contains a substantive answer to ultimate questions—lies itself beyond rationalization, even when reason (*ratio*) appears within it as the highest principle. The *weltanschauliche* opposition is therefore both fundamental and irreconcilable. The rationalist appeal to let the matter be decided collectively from all sides through experiment and observation is neither impartial nor disinterested: it presupposes that the opponent must *a limine* adopt the worldview within which experiment and observation even have meaning; thus, he would have to surrender his own rationalism—and with it his entire *weltanschauliche* position—before he could have even begun to fight for it.

The worldview content of modern rationalism becomes visible in the attachment of central points of its self-understanding to specific values. The aforementioned detachment of intellectual activity from the ontological-metaphysical framework of the opposing worldview is

potentially purposeless or sterile—inquiry to remaining with the fixed priorities of faith.) On the other hand, we must recall the close connection between power and knowledge already present in the self-understanding of the early modern period; it indeed clarifies the linkage of that kind of thinking which carries and drives theoretical curiosity in the modern sense not only to certain (worldly-human!) ends, but also to a particular object: for one can only exercise power over nature, not over God (see Section 3a in this chapter). The worldview preconditions are ultimately no less effective here because scientific research becomes routine, whereby one no longer must confront ultimate questions daily. The theological world of thought likewise had its daily practice, which presupposed a worldview without questioning it: in daily mass or at funerals, for instance, the truth of religion was simply assumed, not re-proven each time.

described as a liberation of thought in general, or as the emancipation of man; modern rationalism thus claims a higher ethical value for itself, and not least with reference to this has it often been able to fight its battles successfully and win over significant thinkers to its cause. What possesses ethical value, and what constitutes liberation or freedom, however, cannot be determined scientifically, but only in a worldview-based manner, and always with regard to the value system of an opponent that is to be eliminated, which serves, so to speak, as a negative yardstick. In other words, the opponent must be branded as the epitome of the most arbitrary and, moreover, to the enslaved man incomprehensible authority, when it is a matter of opposing to him autonomy and transparency of the prevailing conditions in the world. (The opponent may expect indulgence and understanding only when he has long been defeated and rendered harmless, and when the victor has become entangled in such difficulties that doubts about the soundness of his promises arise.) A call is issued to shake off a yoke, to resurrect those spiritually slain by the opponent; a new vitality and a new existential intensity are promised. The new, autonomously self-defining thinking is to become the highest expression of this intensity —which, in reality, merely points to the inseparable connection of the existential with the first and decisive decision of thought within the worldview-based stance. Only this kind of existential intensity now appears as true freedom or as ethically valuable; what was previously regarded as the elevation of man is now classified as slavery—or at best as a noble, but therefore no less dangerous, illusion. In the gloomy portrayal of an entire historical epoch, another seeks its own self-understanding and legitimacy.[65] The so-called Middle Ages certainly

65 The expression "media tempestas" appears for the first time in 1469, "media aetas" in 1518, and "medium aevum" in 1604; shortly thereafter follow "middle age," "middle time" (1605), and "moyen âge" in connection with "moyen temps" (1640) (Burr, *How the Middle Ages got their name*, 813 f.; Edelman, *The Early Uses of Medium Aevum* etc. 3 ff.; idem, *Other early uses*, 327). Already the consciousness of the Renaissance and the conception of the Middle Ages take shape as hostile and at the same time correlative magnitudes, i.e., the humanist advocates of the "Renaissance" derive their sense of self not least from the dark portrayal of the time after the fall of Antiquity (Voss, *Das Mittelalter*, 24 ff.; Varga, *Das Schlagwort vom „finsteren Mittelalter"*, 36 ff.). Tellingly, the humanists speak indiscriminately of the enemies of culture that dominated the Middle Ages and lump together or

had its specific sociological characteristics, which constitute its ideal type or our image of it, but why it should be characterized as morally worse or better than other epochs cannot be determined with certainty. Likewise, it cannot be scientifically determined whether "the human spirit" or "human nature" were suppressed at that time (we are not speaking here of the concrete forms of social domination), since such research would have to proceed from value judgments (and not merely psychological or biological statements) about the essence of man. There can be no doubt, however, that many persons—not the most narrow-minded—have without hesitation experienced precisely that as the fullness of their being or as existential intensity, which, from the worldview perspective of modern rationalism, had to be portrayed as heteronomy or dehumanization. Even in regard to pure intellectual activity, the thorough investigation of a theological complex of questions can hardly have brought less joy or yielded a lesser feeling of freedom than a scientific discovery would later provide.

Such thoughts are idle for contending worldviews; for these do not strive for an understanding of things—and thus also not of the opponent—but rather for the development of a self-understanding defined in negative relation to the opponent and at his expense, which can be used as a weapon. This self-understanding arises from and corresponds to a particular constellation of interests, and its objective function lies in rationalizing and thereby consolidating the latter. That is why it leaves no room for insights into formal-structural commonalities that relate to the nature and rationalization process of

confuse Germans, Arabs, Turks, and monks (Weisinger, *The Renaissance Theory of the Reaction against the Middle Ages*, 462): they want to depict the "dark age" as a closed unit as much as possible, to provide their hypostasis with a fixed target. The allusion to the battle between light and darkness, which resonates in the expression "dark times," originates from the imagery of Christian philosophy of history, whose representatives also speak of dark and "enlightened" ages (Varga, *Das Schlagwort*, 5 ff.). The term *medium aevum* also appears already—with easily understandable function—within the eschatological framework of Christian historiography (Voss, *Das Mittelalter*, 40 and literature cited). These two indicators sufficiently illustrate the ideological role of the new periodization of history, which was already widespread around 1600 and during the course of the 17th century displaced the traditional periodization of the four world empires or the six ages (Voss, *Das Mittelalter*, 49).

worldviews in general, including those shared with the opponent. And that is also why, within this self-understanding, it cannot be admitted that whoever wishes to replace their opponent must inevitably assume some of the latter's functions. The previous form of organization—whether in the realm of society or of thought—must after all be succeeded by a new one, which likewise cannot do without a particular form of rule. Contending worldviews or ideologies therefore have two sides: the emancipatory one, that is, the one consciously directed against the opponent, and another, which unconsciously contains the elements of the emerging rule; for no ideology could permanently replace a competing one if it were to prove incapable of shaping the domain it claims to rule in such a way that the satisfaction of basic social needs remains ensured. The belief in authority—that is, in the supra-personal and binding character of reason, whatever one understands by it—fulfills this latter function in the construct of modern rationalism.[66] Reason and disobedience are synonymous as

66 Even "critical rationalists" today acknowledge the authoritarian and decisionistic, even downright "religious" character of modern rationality (cf. e.g. Popper, *Conjectures*, pp. 7f., 15f.). If, however, they still believe they can break the decisionistic *circulus vitiosus* by replacing polemical reason with critical reason — which supposedly can and must call itself into question (Bartley, *Retreat to Commitment*, p. 150; Mittelstrass, *Neuzeit und Aufklärung*, pp. 134f.) — then they reveal both their theoretical embarrassment and their ignorance regarding the actual historical functioning of ideas. It is paradoxical, after all, to be willing on the one hand to question reason itself, and on the other to look down on the "Christian disorientation of reason" (cf. Chapter I, note 34).

If reason questions itself in order to free itself from any "unreasonable" polemic or authority, then it must at least accept the equality of the opponent — which would amount to a long-term suicide. Modern rationalism would hardly have been able to assert itself historically if it had not been capable of replacing the old authority with a new one. A reason that had questioned itself from the outset — that is, at a time when its opponent was still all-powerful (and we're not talking here yet about polemical agnosticism, which we'll address later) — would have left the impression of a well-meaning but short-lived clown.

The now widespread thesis of self-critical reason is basically just a consoling notion born of the terminal fatigue of Western rationalism and the liberalism that politically sustains it. Moreover, this thesis itself is only intelligible within the context of liberal polemic against all totalitarian monopolies on knowledge

long as the opponent holds sway. Reason and obedience are supposed to coincide once the rule of the opponent collapses. From this point on, submission to the commands of reason and freedom are presented as identical (though the opponent, for his part, also understood freedom as identical with submission to his own worldview principle!), and the majority, who after the victory of a worldview think comfortably and naturally in its categories, find this definition of freedom self-evident. But restless minds and black sheep always reappear who refuse to accept this asserted identity: Max Stirner was one of them.

Precisely because worldview-based rationalism aimed to offer a new existential intensity, it went hand in hand with the rejection of Christian asceticism. Again, we do not wish to investigate the extent to which this asceticism "suppressed the essence of man" or whether the manner in which it was depicted by its critics corresponded to the actual theory and practice of Western Christianity and to the daily realities of most people's lives in the Middle Ages. It suffices to note two things: first, that the rehabilitation of sensuality is not sensual—that is, not caused by changes in the biological nature of humans—but spiritual, namely, it constitutes a component of a particular worldview; and second, that the decision in its favor is polemically motivated, insofar as it was made in a struggle against an opponent who placed considerable value on a different conception of this question. Worldview rationalism and the rehabilitation of sensuality are therefore initially united in a polemical intent; the mobilization of sensuality becomes the weapon of an intellect that aims to establish a thought-system opposing the value scale of another worldview (the paradox of this alliance between intellect and sensuality—which one might at first glance consider heterogeneous elements—is striking and rich in future implications). This polemical intent is also tied to the aforementioned union of rationalism and rejection of asceticism under the shared banner of existential intensity: just as, for the opponent,

and politics. The renunciation of ultimate truth — indeed even of reason itself — is, in essence, merely a phase, and a weapon, in the struggle of the "open society" against its enemies, to borrow Popper's own framing.
That liberal reason must call itself into question in order to remain polemically effective is hardly a good sign for its future viability. For what Popper and his followers recommend to reason for its own salvation — namely, that it call itself into question — is basically the same as advising someone to commit suicide in order to avoid the fear of being killed.

authority and asceticism are to constitute the two components of heteronomy, so here autonomy consists on the one hand in the detachment of intellectual activity from the opponent's worldview framework, and on the other hand in the inclusion of human sensuality on the level of morality. As interconnected forms of existential intensity, rationalism and the rehabilitation of sensuality, according to their own self-understanding, represent a turn toward the immediate or the living: neither the detour of authority for reaching truth, nor that of asceticism for attaining morality, is considered necessary; truth and morality are said to be potentially in us, with us. The human individual is therefore revalued within this union of rationalism and rehabilitation of sensuality; individualism now emerges as an indispensable part of the entire worldview complex.[67]

We will have to address the delicate question of the moral implications of the rehabilitation of sensuality in detail later. With regard to modern rationalism as a total phenomenon, the important fact is that the rehabilitation of sensuality is not limited (to varying degrees) to the realm of morality but has also acquired another meaning. It consists in the programmatic assumption that sensuality in general, or nature, is not only capable of being completely grasped by reason but also worthy of such comprehension. Through this, intellectual activity—once detached from its previous ontological framework—gains a new, permanent, and autonomous object. And just as previously the superiority of the *unum verum bonum* lay not least in the claim that its ontological firmness enabled a firm science, now the empirical world is revalued simply because, in the eyes of the new perspective, it does not resist rational comprehension. On the contrary, it becomes the domain in which intellectual activity can unfold freely

67 In his treatise "Renaissance and Reformation" (Collected Writings, IV, 261 ff.), E. Troeltsch identified the distinctive feature of the Renaissance in its "opposition to Christian asceticism" and contrasted this view with J. Burckhardt's theory of individualism. He established a connection between individualism and the rejection of asceticism, suggesting that the latter intensified the former (p. 272). Indeed, examining that era from the perspective of the rehabilitation of sensuality in philosophical or intellectual-historical terms (not necessarily in political-historical terms) proves more fruitful than the bare theory of individualism. Nevertheless, I believe that a sharp contrast is misplaced here; it becomes obsolete once we introduce the concept of worldview rationalism as a polemical complex of thought.

as existential intensity—that is, as a feeling of power and joy accompanying the dissolution of the world's riddles—freely all the more because it may feel far superior toward its current object than did that intellectual activity which once approached the *unum verum bonum* in deep reverence.[68] This aforementioned alliance between intellect and sensuality—so rich in future potential precisely because of its paradoxical nature—now appears not only in the moral sphere, but also within the emerging natural sciences, in the form of close cooperation between mathematical reasoning and observation or experiment.

This unification of intellect and sensuality in both realms was inevitable, insofar as modern rationalism—as we explained above—must rest on two fundamental assumptions: the detachment of intellectual activity from the old worldview framework leads nowhere without the rehabilitation of sensuality. In other words: modern rationalism requires an empiricist reverse side if it wishes to persist in its polemic against "medieval" thought. This, in my view, is the key to understanding not only its essence but also its contradictory

68 This is obviously the worldview background of the development of an independent epistemological discipline in the modern era. Man is now no longer to stand at the center in a cosmological sense, but rather in an epistemological one (whereas we must not overlook that in the medieval worldview, man was not only center and goal but at the same time a humble creature, embedded in an immutable ontological chain). The priority of the ontological framework in antiquity and the Middle Ages accounts for the inferiority of epistemological questioning—and vice versa: the assumption that the old ontological framework collapsed thanks to the sovereign activity of thought constitutes the worldview foundation for the subsequent development of epistemology. From the perspective of this negative relationship between ontology and epistemology, Kant's talk of his "Copernican revolution" becomes properly intelligible; otherwise, it must sound paradoxical, since Copernicus is regarded as the destroyer of the anthropocentric image, while Kant seeks to restore precisely that. The destruction occurs on the level of ontology, the restoration on that of epistemology. Kant understands his Copernican approach epistemologically and emphasizes its connection with the turning away from ontological considerations (B, XVI = AA, III, 11 f.). Noteworthy is the attenuation of epistemological questioning in modernity as soon as ontology in new guises gains the upper hand (e.g., in the divinization of the totality, whereby man once again moves to the center of ontological events).

development. If the meaning and goal of detaching intellectual activity from the old ontological framework are clear, the rehabilitation of sensuality must remain ambiguous—precisely because of the polemical clarity in the new orientation of thought. In order to be polemically consistent (and this kind of consistency was crucial due to its worldview character), the novel form of thinking had to reject both the contempt for nature in the form of asceticism and its devaluation as an object of knowledge. But in the first case, the rehabilitation of sensuality meant that the human being *is* nature; in the second, it meant that the human being *stands above* nature, since he can grasp it through thought and subordinate it to his practical ends. Since free intellect and free sensuality are regarded as the two fundamental forms of new existential intensity, their differences were initially obscured by their alliance. Nevertheless, in the long run, the thesis that man is nature had to yield not only a radically anti-ascetic morality but also an empiricist epistemology, while from the assumption that man rules over nature emerged intellectualist epistemology and intellectualist morality.

This process, whose intellectual roots we are attempting here to reconstruct in ideal-typical fashion, has not become clearly visible chiefly because the unease brought about by the ambiguity of the rehabilitation of sensuality was reflected in the creation of *philosophemes* whose dualistic character—consciously or unconsciously—took account of that ambiguity and sought to provide a remedy. This is entirely aside from the fact that, from the personal perspective and unique situation of each thinker, various combinations of the fundamental factors in their ideal-typical purity were bound to emerge. The predominance of conciliatory dualistic tendencies manifests itself above all in the vagueness of central concepts (an important example of which, as we will see, is the Enlightenment concept of rationalism itself). Even though, for these and other reasons, the boundaries are blurred, the existence of two fundamental currents within modern rationalism cannot be denied. Nor is it a terminological contradiction to say that modern rationalism contains a rationalist (intellectualist) and an empiricist current. Rationalism, as a *worldview* grounded in the aforementioned programmatic-polemical assumptions, must be strictly distinguished from epistemological and moral rationalism (intellectualism). The latter is only one of the

possible conceptual elaborations or rationalizations of worldview-based rationalism—just as empiricism or sensualism is the other. The logical ambiguity of modern rationalism, which was in no small part the result of its polemical clarity and its worldview character, made possible the emergence of two opposed directions within it, both of which can rightly lay claim to its legacy.

Their shared worldview origin, however, is highly binding. Neither does epistemological rationalism (intellectualism) go so far as to summon the old ontology to justify itself, nor does moral rationalism portray sensuality or the passions simply as the devil's domain, even when it demands their subordination to reason. On the other hand, empiricism must justify itself through rational argument (even the rehabilitation of sensuality, as we know, was a rational and not a sensual act) and, beyond that, must carry the rational into the sensual itself (or vice versa), so long as it seeks to remain epistemologically or morally relevant in a constructive sense. Just as a mathematical natural science must save the phenomena, so too must empiricism, when it appears as theory, respect strictly logical rules. Now this adherence to minimal shared premises is not just a gentleman's agreement, but arises largely from practical-polemical needs. Even before modern rationalism as a whole has gained the upper hand, and although the old opponent has not yet been defeated —and never will be completely defeated—a rapid process of internal differentiation begins, in which its latent, divergent, or even opposed logical potentials crystallize, take on programmatic form, and become centers of new groupings. What was previously merely a current within a single, albeit loose, worldview framework now gradually gains the status of an independent worldview stance. In this new context, rationalism (intellectualism) and empiricism or sensualism are no longer to be regarded merely as philosophical *termini technici*, but as the starting points of two directions within modern thought: one of which, in order to protect moral values, must approach the boundary of an idealistic ontology, while the other flirts with nihilism by emphasizing the rooting of spirit in biological or social factors and thereby the complete relativity or insurmountable heteronomy of its undertakings. These are, of course, extreme positions, and it cannot be denied that attempts at mediation are more numerous; yet it is equally certain that mediation occurs in relation to and out of fear of the

extremes. Regardless of the degree of their theoretical elaboration, these extremes stand like specters and motivate actions and reactions; one defends oneself against the foreseeable final consequences of a mode of thought as if they were already a tangible threat.

The memory of the shared worldview origin therefore acquires, under the conditions of the aforementioned process of differentiation, a concrete polemical meaning: namely, each side accuses the other of betraying the common cause. From the opponent's point of view, idealism signifies a return to the arms of theology, while materialism, in its own way, is said to endanger precisely what had been achieved in the struggle against theological heteronomy—that is, freedom (any reader familiar with the texts of modern philosophy could supplement this systematic summary with a wealth of quotations). No one can openly question the shared foundation—which, according to our analysis, contains both the message of freedom of thought and the rehabilitation of sensuality—without handing arguments over to the now-hated brother; thus all sides cling to it, with the exception of the few who openly adopt one of the two extreme positions. But now this shared foundation becomes a battleground that the new opponents inevitably have in common. And since each side sees itself as the true executor of the commands of modern rationalism, the struggle first revolves around the interpretation of its key concepts: What is reason? What is nature?—with each side presenting its own version as the best weapon to defeat the old, once-shared opponent. But this struggle against the old opponent is now carried out with a sideways glance at the new one. This contributes to the infiltration of motives into the intellectual world of the two new opponents that were previously considered the intellectual property of the commonly fought theology. In other words, the polemical nature of thought shows itself not least in the fact that the same thing does not appear acceptable in itself, but only depending on its connection with certain substantive theses or its potential integration into a desired broader framework. The partial, admitted or denied appropriation of old and once-despised ideas in the course of the new conflicts is, however, merely a symptom of a broader and more important process. As the new opponents gradually attain worldview status, their confrontation absorbs the previous one; fundamental structures of thought continue to live on in new forms—and this transmission explains why the conscious or unconscious

recourse to older ideas within modern thought is anything but rare.

For a basic explanation of the contradictory development of modern rationalism as well as the persistence of traditional structures of thought *despite* the sharp opposition to traditional contents of thought, we must discuss a truly fundamental question that will also play a central role in what follows. This concerns the *origin and function of the suspicion of nihilism*. The main reason for the emergence of the suspicion of nihilism has already been suggested and will be illustrated clearly enough in the next sections through textual analysis: the *rehabilitation of sensuality* (more precisely: a specific kind of it) led to a *displacement of spirit* and thus to a *threatening of free will, values, and norms*—especially since all of that, as we know, was inseparably linked to the concept of spirit in the philosophical tradition. What still needs to be clarified, however, is why the suspicion of nihilism—*despite the fact that consistent nihilists have been exceedingly rare in reality*—has been assigned such importance in modern conflicts, both in confrontation with the theological opponent and within the rival factions of modern rationalism, and why people have generally reacted to it with such extreme sensitivity. This question cannot be answered without first introducing a very general anthropological and cultural-philosophical reflection.

A dominant worldview presents its own value system or morality as the only possible one—that is, as *the* value system and *the* morality *tout court*. Its representatives must therefore designate any fundamental attack against it—or against themselves—as an act that undermines the very foundations of a dignified human life. This mode of argumentation (whose partisanship only becomes apparent when we consider not our own but a long-defeated worldview) is justified and effective in that it instinctively draws on the fact that within culture—and because of the reflective doubling of the world that culture enables, i.e., the translation of all life-factors into the ideal—the instinct of self-preservation is entwined with the thesis that life has meaning. Thus, anyone who questions the meaning of life must reckon with the stubborn reaction of the human instinct for self-preservation. By presenting itself as defender of this meaning (which, according to it, can only be a single meaning, etc.), a worldview in fact appeals to the human instinct of self-preservation. And by branding the opponent as

a nihilist, it tacitly acknowledges that nihilism,[69] as an attack on the instinct of self-preservation, can never endure—certainly not as a fully developed system of thought—especially since no society can exist without a system of moral norms, and such a system in turn logically presupposes belief in the meaning of life. But the opponent feels this configuration no less clearly. He must therefore endeavor to portray himself as the representative of constructive values, which ideally *strengthen* the belief in the meaning of life or *free it* from the flaws of previous conceptions. That a rising worldview outbids the ruling one in the auction of values does not merely—or necessarily—mean a posture of apology or defense, but rather a *bid for hearts*—indeed, a claim to power. Since social dominance cannot be exercised without the establishment of a system of norms—and since this system must logically rest on belief in the meaning of life—it follows that the defense of life's meaning and of morality *as such* is indispensable for anyone who lays claim to power, or seeks to overturn the powerful. *Moralism and the will to power are by no means mutually exclusive*—despite the protests and affirmations of the moralists—if one considers them objectively, i.e., in their concrete historical function.

Dispelling the suspicion of nihilism was thus a primary polemical necessity for modern rationalism—indeed, a question of survival. Its classical representatives therefore fought on two fronts

69 The concept of nihilism is frequently used polemically and then mostly equated with a lust for destruction, as in our hypothetical argument here. In reality, those who wish to accuse someone of nihilism in this sense commit a logical error by ascribing something normative to nihilism (namely, the thesis: everything ought to be destroyed)—quite apart from the fact that morally motivated outbursts of destruction are far from rare in history. Moreover, no historical movement has yet appeared under the banner of a will-to-destruction, although this must understandably be claimed by some opponents. For these reasons, I use the term "nihilism" in this work to characterize the thesis of the complete relativity of all values, which does not result in any normative claim (including a will-to-destruction). Although from this perspective life is not necessarily to be destroyed, it is nonetheless objectively meaningless. This form of nihilism can become a scientific worldview, but like nihilism in the sense of a lust for destruction, it remains incapable of gaining social traction. When helpless skepticism spreads, it is only a sign that people simply need new certainties. In this case, the widespread nihilism or skepticism does not work in its own favor, but against the dominant values and for those to whom the future belongs.

simultaneously: against the theological opponent and—often much more fiercely—against all those who showed themselves willing to draw skeptical or even nihilistic conclusions from the direct or indirect dethronement of God (theology) and the resulting primacy of man (anthropology). Machiavelli and Hobbes, or La Mettrie and Stirner, were attacked primarily by defenders of modern rationalism who felt compromised, while conservative theologians and their fellow travelers gleefully saw in such extreme cases the tangible confirmation of their prophecies and the moral essence of the new ideas laid bare. For their reaction against the latter was based above all on the argument that these ideas would sooner or later lead to relativism and thus to immoralism, since the elimination of God—or of metaphysically grounded values—logically implied that the spatially and temporally conditioned, hence unstable, human being would remain as the sole measure of all things.

On the indispensability of values, then, both opponents are in complete agreement for the reasons outlined above—only not on their content. What must be noted, however, is that if values as such—that is, independently of their specific content—can only be justified with ultimate arguments on the basis of a particular mode of thinking, then both opponents, insofar as they equally advocate for values and for the meaning of life, must share certain fundamental structures of thought. From this perspective, and on the basis of the previous three paragraphs, it becomes easier to understand why not only traditional contents of thought but above all traditional structures of thought could persist into the modern age and even begin a new, brilliant career. They did so, however, by becoming largely fused with new content positions that were in part diametrically opposed to those traditionally associated with them. In this dual perspective—of a battle over content and the continuity of certain structures of thought—the problem of the relationship between the modern and the traditional can be best assessed. Those who particularly value the indestructibility or the "inexhaustible fertility" of Christianity tend to minimize the break in content or to forget the long, successful struggle against the Church's former dominance. Meanwhile, the proud opponents of "metaphysics" typically ignore the continuity of certain structures of thought, which becomes especially evident in the neuralgic question of norms. Both views may be ideologically useful, but they are

historically false.[70]

When we speak here—through this dual perspective—of the commonalities shared by opponents, we are referring not only to that specific aspect of the secularization process in which, for example, the Judeo-Christian schema of historical development was placed at the service of the triumph of "Reason" or of "Man," or in which the key concepts of modern political theory originated from theological ones,[71] but above all to the adoption of those structures of thought on which the justification of values traditionally depended—structures that were

70 Because both positions serve ideological-apologetic purposes, they will continue to have their spokesmen in the future as well—that is, a generally acceptable solution to the problem of secularization is not to be expected. In purely logical terms, however, it must be noted that the widespread confusion is due largely to the conflation of thought structures and thought content. As for the defenders of the legitimacy of modernity, they make their apologetic task too easy when they primarily attack the crude notion that modernity is merely a metamorphosis of Christian substance (Blumenberg, *Legitimität*, 18). It is a confusion of the formal and the substantive when, for example, the difference between Christian eschatology and the modern idea of progress is located in the former's transcendence of the world versus the latter's immanence in the world (*Legitimität*, 23): transcendence and immanence are contents, and without a distinction between such contents, there would be no reason to speak of secularization at all (cf. Löwith's review, especially p. 199, see also p. 198). What is formal here is the idea of gradual, goal-directed, or teleological development. Blumenberg also doubts the genetic determination of modern fundamental ideas by Judeo-Christian thought (*Legitimität*, 23 f.); but he demands such determination as proof only because he conceives secularization primarily as a direct and conscious adoption or metamorphosis of content, without considering the possibility of the unconscious survival of thought structures at all.
From our point of view, by contrast, the question of genetic determination in Blumenberg's linear sense must appear secondary. The real issue is whether certain central thought structures, which were characteristic of the theological worldview, had to reappear within the modern framework and under quite different signs—whether knowingly or not—simply because modern rationalism subscribed to norms and values at all and used them as weapons of worldview. For it was precisely the normative component of thinking, closely tied to claims to power, that had already brought these thought structures into being within theological metaphysics. Functional identity, however, does not necessarily imply (direct) genetic determination, and in this sense Blumenberg is correct when he sharply distinguishes the emergence of

the least affected by the development of modern science and technology. As an example, consider the function of transcendence within traditional metaphysics. It—or God—constituted the source and embodiment of all values; their rooting in God appeared precisely as the guarantee of their objective validity and thus also of their realizability: what already exists in reality is at least more easily made real again, even if only partially and on another level. This traditional transcendence was either eliminated in the modern age or its social

the idea of progress from its "standing in" for religious interpretations of history (*Legitimität*, 36). But he is mistaken when he goes on to write that the belief in progress had its "empirical foundation" in the progress of theoretical discovery of the world and in the effectiveness of scientific methodology. The history of the emergence of the terms “Renaissance” and “Middle Ages” (cf. above, note 5) shows that the most elementary form of the triadic and teleologically conceived modern schema of history predates the development of modern natural science by a wide margin; the fact that in this schema “progress” is felt to be the restoration of the original state (Antiquity) is no more a contradiction than the undoing of the Fall by the Last Judgment.

Blumenberg, who rightly emphasizes the opposition between theology and reason as a condition for the self-assertion of the latter (*Legitimität*, 50), fails to see—due to his linear-rationalist perspective—that the similarity of certain fundamental thought structures does not mitigate the substantive opposition, but rather intensifies it. For the claims to power present on both sides are not to be found in the conscious content of thought (after all, what is proclaimed openly and programmatically is merely reason, freedom, and progress, or love, faith, and salvation), but in the (mostly unconscious) structures of thought: here we encounter the separation between this world and the beyond, in the form of an opposition between reality and norm or ideal, between present and future—regardless of whether the ideal norm is represented by God or by Nature or Reason, and regardless of whether the future is envisioned as the Last Judgment or Paradise, or as the revolution and the classless society that dominates nature through science and technology.

Quite independently of the specific content with which this formal framework is filled—claims to power are made by whoever can formulate or interpret norms authoritatively and thereby point the “true” way into the future.

Thought structures that are socially effective must therefore be such that they permit the game of norm-interpretation and the justification of present actions by appeal to future ends; and this is precisely the purpose of using conveniently interpretable slogans or concepts (a major shortcoming of Blumenberg’s work is that he does not systematically examine the structure and function of concepts like reason and nature; yet such investigations would

efficacy was significantly reduced. However, this did not eliminate the division between transcendence and immanence from the world. It re-emerged, implicitly to be sure (for any open avowal of it could have been construed as a confession of traditional transcendence and thus had to be avoided for polemical reasons), but clearly enough; it surfaced precisely within that immanence which had taken the place of divine transcendence and had to fulfill the same normative function. More concretely: that "Nature" which at first stood for immanence in opposition to the transcendence of God soon became more than just

have shown him where the unconscious commonalities of conscious opponents may lie). Because the opponents make equally strong claims to power, they must share correspondingly structured thought systems; but because they are opponents, they must fill these with radically different content—precisely for the sake of "self-assertion" (Blumenberg), that is, to justify their opposition. The commonality of thought structure and opposition of content belong together, however paradoxical that may sound—precisely because only those who share opposition can be genuine opponents: the mutual claim to power that produces this mutual enmity is, as said, embedded in the structure of thought itself.

71 Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*, especially pp. 175 ff.; C. Schmitt, *Politische Theologie*, p. 49. In Lübbe's elegant little work, all the essential aspects—politico-juridical, cultural, and scientific—of secularization as a process of the emancipation of modernity from its Christian origins and bindings are discussed one after another (*Säkularisierung*, pp. 23 ff., 34 ff., 56 ff.). Because the study is oriented toward conceptual history, however, it does not address the problem of secularization in the sense of the survival of certain thought structures as we understand it, even though the topic is hinted at (*Säkularisierung*, p. 133). Stallmann, for his part, very correctly distinguishes the politico-juridical sense (the transfer of ecclesiastical-spiritual rights of rule or property to secular authorities) from the intellectual-historical sense (ideas detach from their original religious context of justification and are derived from general reason), and takes it upon himself to explain the transition from the former to the latter (*Was ist Säkularisierung?*, p. 5). His findings, however, are relevant only to a specific theological question associated with the names of Bonhoeffer and Gogarten (cf. also Lübbe, *Säkularisierung*, pp. 86 ff.).
Delekat, also writing from a theological perspective, tends to equate secularization with de-Christianization or with "atheism, anti-humanism, and nihilism" (*Über den Begriff der Säkularisation*, especially p. 38 f.). Behind this lies, however, the assumption that norms can only be justified in a Christian manner—and that not merely in terms of the content, but also of the structure of thought.

the empirical world—it acquired the status of a higher instance, one that transcends the mere sum of perceivable phenomena and objectively dictates what is good and evil. Living according to nature now meant obeying commandments as universally valid and anchored in true being as those of God had once been. Likewise, modern Reason, insofar as it claimed to replace divine commandments, was not understood empirically—that is, as the reason of any given individual—but was also elevated to a supra-personal normative instance, transcending all empirically known forms of reason, with its seat and bearer necessarily left undefined. Finally, if the primacy of Man takes the place of the primacy of God, then this "Man" is again not the empirical, accidental person on the street, but the idea of Man, which in turn functions as the ontological source of normativity, since the duties and behavioral rules of the empirical human being are derived directly from it. The gap between the empirical human and the idea of man is often referred to as "alienation," which is to be overcome through "correct" education or at the end of a historical process.

It is obvious—and abundantly confirmed historically—that modern transcendence, as it centers around key concepts such as Nature, Reason, and Man, functions socially in a manner similar to the old. It is in reference to it that the prevailing scale of values is established, and sovereign is whoever can offer a binding interpretation of it. Things were not essentially different in the past regarding the (openly) transcendent idea of God. And even now, social and intellectual conflicts are ignited, not least over the "correct" interpretation of these key concepts. That would not be possible if these concepts did not contain a transcendent aspect—one that exceeds any empirically grounded claim.

2. The Valorization of Nature and Mathematical Natural Science

a) The Aristotelian-Thomistic Dualism and the Monistic Countercurrents in the Renaissance

The modern rehabilitation of sensuality as such is best understood, in terms of its ideological content, through the valorization of the concept of nature, which culminates in the autonomization of nature—that is, its complete emancipation from God. To grasp the specific features of this development, a brief recollection of the Christian conception that had prevailed until then is necessary—and not in its extreme ascetic or explicitly nature-hostile versions, but precisely where it appears most favorable to nature: in the Thomistic system. A summary of Thomism from this perspective would simultaneously serve as a first illustration of the hermeneutic guidelines developed in the previous chapter, insofar as it represents a paradigmatic example of a comprehensive mode of thought rooted in a concrete polemic, one that addresses the question of the relationship between spirit and sensuality—or the question of being—in light of a particular stance on the question of value, and ultimately constructs a coherent, multidimensional system whose levels (epistemology, ethics, and cosmology) are structurally interconnected.

We do not need to go into the controversial questions here of whether and to what extent a Latin Averroism existed,[72] whether and to what extent Arabic-Aristotelian or directly Aristotelian doctrines were primarily perceived as being in opposition to certain theological principles, or whether and to what extent those thinkers who noticed such oppositions were also willing to carry out a radical and irrevocable separation between philosophy and theology. The fact is

72 The assumption of a "Latin Averroism," which goes back to Renan (*Averroès et l'averroïsme*), was further developed by Mandonnet (*Siger de Brabant*, esp. I, 142 ff.) and also supported with some modifications by Gilson (*La Philos. au Moyen Âge*, 550 ff.), was above all called into question by Van Steenberghen, who seeks to explain the points of contact between Christian thinkers and Averroes through their shared recourse to Aristotle (*Aristotle in the West*, 201 ff.; *Die Philosophie im 13. Jahrhundert*, 370 ff.).

that, since the so-called Renaissance of the 12th century,[73] a kind of intellectual pluralism emerged, which often manifested in the tendency to allow philosophical theses to stand (even if only as *probabilitas* and not as *veritas*), even when they contradicted revelation. Although a doctrine of the double truth was never formulated *expressis verbis*, the revival of Aristotelianism—whatever form it took—[74]and its use as an autonomous frame of reference posed a direct threat to the theological monopoly.[75] Philosophy as it appeared in the form of Aristotelianism thus had to be either combated from a Platonic-Augustinian standpoint or integrated into a theological framework and thereby rendered harmless. Thomas' sense for the needs of the historical constellation opted for the latter, more modern and long-term possibility, which gave old-line orthodoxy reason for harsh reproaches.[76] Thomas proceeded as follows: he abandoned the traditional subordination or neglect of philosophy, but to the extent that he acknowledged philosophy's right to its own methodology, he denied it the right to speak about the truths of faith or to try to prove or disprove them by rational arguments.[77] Philosophy could indeed, as metaphysics, constitute a kind of theology, but this kind of theology was inferior to the other one, which is based on Holy Scripture.[78] The limits of philosophy are thus recalled at precisely the moment when it receives its highest possible elevation. The condition for this elevation, of course, is that philosophy be "sound"—that is, that it exist alongside and beneath faith without calling it into question.[79] It is precisely the

73 On this generally: Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, passim; Gandillac-Jeauneau, *Entretiens sur la Renaissance du 12e siècle*, esp. 7 ff., 31 ff., 513 ff.

74 Gilson, *Études de philos. méd.*, 51 ff.; Maier, *Metaphysische Hintergründe*, esp. 5 ff., 27, 42 ff.; Mac Clintock, *Perversity and Error*, 79 ff.

75 See the concise presentation by Gregory, *Filosofia e teologia nella crisi di XIII sec.*, esp. 6 f.

76 Details in Mandonnet, *Siger* 98 ff.; cf. Van Steenberghen, *Die Philosophie im 13. Jahrh.*, 430 ff., and the bibliographic references there.

77 *Quest. Quodl.*, Qu. III Art. XXXI (= p. 128); *de Trinit.*, Qu. II Art. I ad 5 (= *Opusc.* III, 44 f.); *de Rat. Fid.*, Cap. II (= *Opusc.* III, 253).

78 *De Trinit.*, Qu. V Art. IV (= *Opusc.* III, 119 f.).

79 Such a case is considered unthinkable by Thomas from the outset; a philosophy that questions theology could arise only from error or ignorance (see e.g. *de Unit. Intell.*, last paragraph = *Opusc.* I, 69).

conviction of the (strategic) necessity and the (theoretical) possibility of a contradiction-free coexistence, thanks to the separation of domains, that drives Thomas toward his synthetic undertaking. The supremacy of theology is not in doubt, but it is to be reinforced and made manifest precisely through the use of secular wisdom.[80] That this use can extend to the formulation of principles of revelation in philosophical terminology[81] should not lead to the mistaken belief that one could distill from Thomas a (Christian) philosophy. The debate over this is in any case idle, since Thomas pursued a philosophical foundation of his theology (positively through the use of philosophical concepts and negatively through demonstrating the limits of philosophical reason), as well as a relatively autonomous development of his philosophical expositions, only in accordance with their respective relevance for the overall theological construction.[82]

This acknowledgment of the (relative) rights of philosophy—which in the intellectual context of the time was largely synonymous with Aristotelianism and thus necessarily entailed a direct (though by no means slavish) return to it on Thomas' part—acquires its true significance when we realize that it was not merely a methodological-formal decision, but in fact a thoroughly substantive one. For Thomas no less than for the proponents of the Averroist-Aristotelian current, human philosophy considers things as they are in themselves, while faith understands them in their relation to God.[83] Thus, the elevation of philosophy also entails an elevation not only of autonomous rational inquiry but also of *sensibility*, both as its object and as its foundation. This manifests itself on various levels—always alongside the effort not to let this elevation of sensibility degenerate into a threat to the spirit, which would have its counterpart in a threat to theology from philosophy. In Thomistic epistemology, the rejection of the

80 *De Trinit.* Qu. II Art. III ad 5 (= *Opusc.* III, 52 f.); *Sentent.* Prol. Qu. I Art. I (= I, 8).

81 See, for example, the exegesis of *Exodus* 3:13–14 based on the philosophical concepts *esse* and *essentia*, *Contr. Gent.*, I. I cap. XXII (= p. 24).

82 The opposing views on this question are held by Gilson, *Thomisme* 13 ff., and Van Steenberghen, *Die Philos. im 13. Jahrh.*, 323 ff. (also: *Aristotle in the West*, 157 ff.), who denies the existence of an independent Christian philosophy. Cf. the remarks of Kluxen, *Philos. Ethik bei Thomas*, 1 ff.

83 *Contr. Gent.*, I. II cap. IV (= p. 92).

antiphilosophical attitude of traditional Augustinianism is reflected in the repudiation of its *innatism*: the origin of human knowledge lies in the senses.[84] Yet the high regard for the senses and for empirical knowledge does not stop there. The truth of the senses is subordinated to the higher truth of rational knowledge,[85] and the autonomy of the intellect is emphasized—the intellect not only knows things and itself, but also knows *that* it knows.[86] The intellect surpasses sense experience,[87] since its judgments ultimately rest on eternal principles.[88] Thomas is fully aware why he cannot carry epistemological empiricism to its logical conclusion: epistemological positions have consequences for freedom and thus for morality. In a highly noteworthy sentence, he writes: "*tota ratio libertatis ex modo cognitionis dependet*" ("the entire basis of freedom depends on the mode of cognition"), and he again stresses the autonomy and reflexivity of reason, concluding: "*unde totius libertatis radix est in ratione constituta*"[89] ("hence the root of all freedom lies in reason"). Since the theory of knowledge is conceived with a view to moral philosophy, the structural parallel between these two domains is unsurprising; indeed, Thomas himself points to the correspondence between the hierarchy of the faculties of cognition and that of the *appetitus* of the soul: the *appetitus intellectivus* and *sensitivus* differ in the same way as *apprehensum per intellectum* and *apprehensum per sensum*.[90] The freedom of the will—without which, as Thomas says, there can be no talk of moral responsibility—[91]is thus theoretically grounded in this dual classification. It is understood in an intellectualist way, in that free choice is portrayed as judgment or knowledge;[92] *liberum arbitrium* and

84 *Sum. Theol.*, I Qu. XII Art. XII Resp.; *De Verit.*, Qu. X Art. VI, cf. Qu. XII Art. III ad 2 (= *Quaest. Disp.*, I, 268 ff., 326 f.).
85 *De Verit.*, Qu. I Art. IX (= *Quaest. Disp.* I, 24 f.).
86 *Contr. Gent.*, I. II cap. LXVI (= p. 162).
87 *Sum. Theol.*, I Qu. LXXXIV, Art. VI, ad 3.
88 *De Verit.*, Qu. X Art. VI, ad 6 (= *Quaest. Disp.* I, 271). It is characteristic that Thomas identifies the opposition between sense and intellect already in Aristotle and uses it as an argument against the Averroists, *de Unit. Intell.* = *Opusc.* I, 39 f.
89 *De Verit.*, Qu. XXIV Art. II ad resp. (= *Quaest. Disp.* I, 592 f.).
90 *Sum. Theol.*, I Qu. LXXX Art. II ad resp.
91 *De Verit.*, Qu. XXIV Art. I ad resp. (= *Quaest. Disp.* I, 587).
92 *De Verit.*, Qu. XXIV Art. I ad 1 und 17 (= *Quaest. Disp.* I, 588, 590).

liberum iudicium are synonymous,[93] and despite the mutual determination of intellect and will in moral action, the former remains *nobilior*—[94]more noble. On the other hand, the *appetitus sensitivus* is also granted its due place in moral consideration, just as the senses are in epistemology. Not only are passions not evil in themselves, but virtue does not exclude them either.[95] As a unity of soul and body, man is to realize virtue and beatitude also through his sensuous part.[96] At the same time, the perfection of virtue is to be expected from reason, not from nature—[97]just as the soul, as the *forma* of the body, is related to it without being wholly absorbed into it.[98] Thomistic anthropology, in its ambiguity, thus exhibits the same structure that characterizes Thomistic epistemology and moral philosophy.

Let us now turn to the main object of our interest—namely, the cosmology or natural doctrine of Thomas. Once again, we encounter a clear elevation of sensibility, in the form of the attribution of self-activity to natural things—albeit under certain conditions. Against those who, invoking God's omnipotence, regarded creatures as mere instruments, Thomas emphasizes that this would deprive those very creatures of the best thing they possess, namely, "actionem ad aliquem effectum producendum"—the capacity to act and produce an effect.[99] Natural things wish to resemble God, not merely by being passive effects, but by appearing as active causes.[100] Carried through consistently, this thesis would naturally lead to the complete autonomization of nature. Thomas must therefore, with one hand, take back what he gallantly granted with the other. First of all, the ability of natural things to act as causes for other things was given to them by God along with their being; thus, it is not truly an intrinsic right, but a

93 See e.g. *Sum. Theol.*, I Qu. LIX Art. II ad resp. There also the sentence: "ubicumque est intellectus est liberum arbitrium." Cf. the analysis by Wittmann, *Die Ethik des Hl. Thomas*, 106 ff.

94 *Sum. Theol.*, I, Qu. LXXXII Art. III Concl. and IV Concl.

95 *Sum. Theol.*, I, II Qu. LIX Art. I and II *sed contra*

96 *De malo*, Qu. XII Art. I ad 5 (= *Quaest. Disp.* II, 615

97 *Virtut. in Comm.* Art. VIII ad resp. (= *Quaest. Disp.* III, 236).

98 *De Spirit. Creat.* Art. II ad 4 and 19 (= *Quaest. Disp.* III, 37, 38). Thomas excludes any *continuatio*, *compositio*, or *colligatio* of soul and body (*Contr. Gent.* I. II cap. LVI–LVII = pp. 146 ff.).

99 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. LXIX (= p. 297).

100 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. XXI (= p. 239).

sign of the Creator's boundless goodness.[101] When something acts, it does so by God's power; hence, God is the cause of the activity of all things.[102] It would certainly be possible for God to act as the first cause without nature or the *causae secundae*, but it is God's will to act through the mediation of nature.[103] With this caveat, Thomas sometimes speaks—following Aristotle—of nature as an autonomous and purposive actor.[104] On the other hand, he regards the term *natura naturans*, especially given its association with Averroism,[105] with great suspicion and insists that it should refer exclusively to the creative activity of God.[106] For representatives of pantheistic tendencies, such as David of Dinant—whose work was burned in 1209—he has the harshest words.[107] Given this stance, one cannot shake the impression that Thomas's cosmological elevation of nature is not an end in itself or born of pure love for nature, but serves a concrete function within his overall strategy.[108] Just as epistemological empiricism and the demonstration of the limits of human reason ultimately served to leave God to faith, so too does the elevation of nature serve, in light of the latest developments on the theological-philosophical front and with the most modern theoretical equipment, to tackle the central question of theodicy and thereby strengthen the position of theology. God is exonerated by attributing the imperfections and evils of the world to the operation of the *causae secundae*.[109] Thomas even denies the existence of evil altogether, arguing that what appears as evil either arises from good intentions or unwittingly contributes to the

101 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. LXX (= p. 299).
102 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. LXVII (= p. 293
103 *De Pot.*, Qu. III Art. VIII (= *Quaest. Disp.* II, 70).
104 For example, in using the Aristotelian expression ἡ φύσις οὐδὲν ποιεῖ μάτην (*De Caelo* 290a31 or 291b13 etc.) (*Contr. Gent.* I. II cap. LV = p. 145).
105 Siebedt, *Über die Entstehung der Termini natura naturans und natura naturata*, esp. 275 f.
106 *Sum. Theol.*, I, II, Qu. LXXXV Art. VI ad resp.
107 *Contr. Gent.* I. I cap. XVII (= p. 17); cf. *Sum. Theol.* I, Qu. III Art. VIII. General remarks on Thomas's critique of pantheism in Sertillanges, *Thomas*, 230 ff., 270 ff. (from a Thomistic perspective).
108 As Gilson (in *Thomisme*, 237) puts it: in defending the rights of nature, Thomas sees the only way to defend the rights of God.
109 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. LXXI (= p. 300).

realization of good ends.[110] Everything that exists is good and true by virtue of its being.[111] Thomas must assert this, because despite all the autonomy granted to nature—and precisely out of fear that this autonomy might take on impermissible dimensions—he forcefully affirms the omnipresence of God, in the entirety of His being.[112] Yet he must again insist on the distinction between God and nature in order to safeguard, alongside God's exoneration from evil, His immutability: if nature were not relatively autonomous and everything were left solely to God, He would obviously have had to diversify Himself in order to bring about diverse effects.[113] Thus, Thomas's overall argument must constantly navigate between two positions that, in their extreme forms, contradict one another. For the elevation of sensibility and nature must not endanger spirit, in either its human or divine dimension: for spirit is the author and creator of the universe, and its good constitutes the ultimate end of this universe.[114]

To better understand later controversies about Aristotelianism and Scholasticism, we must recall a crucial point of Aristotelian physics and epistemology—one that also explains why the theologian Thomas could, in good conscience, align himself with the pagan Aristotle. As is well known, Aristotle associated the concept of a natural being with that of self-motion.[115] But this does not mean that every movement of natural beings originates in their self-motion, or that the nature understood as cause is identical with the cause *of* nature. The movement of natural beings is self-motion in the sense that the specific constitution of each natural being only admits one kind of movement, one proper to that being's nature: for example, man must move as a man, i.e., in accordance with human nature. Even externally caused movement triggers in a natural being a chain of reactions appropriate to its own mode of being. For this reason, a single external cause can set off different movements in different natural beings. Thus,

110 Ibid.
111 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. VII (= p. 228); *De Verit.* Qu. XXI Art. III (= *Quaest. Disp.* I, 512 f.).
112 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. LXVIII (= p. 295); *Sum. Theol.*, I, Qu. VIII Art. 1 esp. ad 3.
113 *Contr. Gent.*, I. III cap. LXIX (= p. 296).
114 *Contr. Gent.*, I. I cap. I (= p. 1).
115 *Phys.* 192b13–14.

externally caused motion and self-motion are not opposites in this view, which also implies that the self-motion of natural beings should not be understood in an absolute sense—it is perfectly compatible with, indeed inseperable from, external causation.[116] This also explains the necessity of the *First Mover* despite the self-motion of natural beings. The ultimate source of motion lies in the First Mover, but he can move natural beings only in ways appropriate to their specific natures.[117] Since Aristotle's theory of motion is based on the premise of an immediate, present connection between the mover and the moved, it becomes clear that the First Mover's activity does not consist in having once set the world in motion in the past and then left it to itself. The origin of motion is, in other words, not to be thought of temporally but causally; as Aristotle says, the First Mover must move eternally,[118] since every instance of motion requires a simultaneous cause and ceases with its cause.[119] The Aristotelian world thus requires the constant presence of God no less than the Thomistic one. The concept of the *First Mover* later had to undergo a radical reinterpretation when this view was replaced by that of the *world-machine*.

Even Thomas's epistemological dualism has its Aristotelian precedent. Aristotle, indeed, is not capable—on the basis of his sensualist premises—of providing a satisfying genetic account of the *nous*, specifically the *nous poietikos* (active intellect). He explicitly abandons such an attempt when he states outright that the *nous* enters from the outside.[120] It is the divine element within us, and its presence in man bridges the gap between him and God; what can only be a temporally limited elevation for man is, for the *nous* as God, a permanent state.[121] This conception also has normative consequences: the *nous*, as the origin of the world, is the Good itself.[122] Ontological

116 See the subtle analysis by Wieland, *Die aristotel. Physik*, 234, 236 f. Wieland cites (p. 239) a passage from Thomas's commentary on the *Physics* (II, 1,5) showing that Thomas understood Aristotle in this sense.

117 So too Thomas, see e.g. *Quaest. Quodl.* I Art. VII ad 2 (= p. 15): "Deus movet omnia secundum modum eorum."

118 *Phys.* 266a13: κινεῖν ἄπειρον χρόνον (cf. *Met.* 1073a7).

119 Wieland, *Die aristotel. Physik*, 314 f., 336 f. Cf. Düring, *Aristoteles*, 330 f.

120 *De gen. anim.* 736b (θύραθεν εἰσιέναι); cf. *De anim.* 413a6 ff.

121 *Metaph.* 1072b15.

122 *Metaph.* 1075a38.

and normative reasons thus compel Aristotle to make a logical leap in his epistemology. To the extent that he does not renounce Plato's philosophical ideal—namely, the secure knowledge of an eternally immutable ontological foundation—even while rejecting the theory of Ideas, he must retain a Platonizing concept of *nous*.[123] His difficulty arises because, unlike Plato, he wants to locate substance in the individual thing, and must therefore also elevate the lower faculties of knowledge. The adoption of the aforementioned Platonic ideal makes his theory of *nous* necessary—even at the price of a logical leap. All of this must be mentioned in connection with Thomas, because the much-discussed question of his relationship to Platonism cannot be satisfactorily resolved so long as one regards Thomas's "Platonism" as a simple contradiction to his Aristotelianism, or fails to notice the Platonic elements within Aristotle himself.[124]

There is no doubt that the Thomistic elevation of nature and natural knowledge did accommodate the new, forward-looking intellectual currents—indeed, it sought to absorb them and thus render

123 Düring, *Aristoteles*, 580, 583.

124 Hirschberger (*Platonismus im Mittelalter*, esp. 126 f.) aptly pointed out the Platonic component of Aristotelianism that also passed into Thomism. On the other hand, Henle has especially refuted more recent attempts to make Thomas into a Platonist through detailed textual interpretation (*Thomas and Platonism*, xvii ff.), showing that Thomas, depending on the needs of his argument, sometimes emphasizes the commonalities, sometimes the differences between Plato and Aristotle (423 ff.); not only does Thomas appreciate the value of Platonic intellectualism as a weapon against skepticism (314) and thus knows when to temper Aristotelian empiricism (320 f.), he also gladly acknowledges and shares the common ground between the Platonic and Aristotelian views regarding the ontological foundation of the *unum bonum separatum* (411). Even in his critique of Platonic soul doctrine, Thomas exercises restraint, as he clearly recognizes its usefulness for the Christian idea of immortality (398 ff.). Why Thomas nevertheless could not abandon Aristotelian empiricism becomes understandable from his concrete polemical considerations. The partial devaluation of the human intellect through its strong dependence on the senses is meant not only to justify epistemologically the necessity of belief in a God who has become unknowable to the intellect, but also to challenge the Averroist identification of the human and divine intellects, which necessarily implied a denial of individuality and thus of the personal immortality of the individual soul (cf. Douglas, *Phil. and Psych. of Pomponazzi*, 46 ff.).

them harmless. Following his teacher Albertus Magnus,[125] Thomas emphasizes the necessity of studying nature,[126] but at the same time wishes to place it in the service of the knowledge of God—that is, within the framework of a theological worldview. Deepening one's engagement with nature ultimately means a deeper grasp of the Christian meaning of life through a deeper insight into the will and essence of God.[127] But not only this stance, also internal doctrinal difficulties limited the Thomistic elevation of nature. A prominent example is Aristotle's doctrine of the eternity of the world, which clearly posed difficulties for the Christian doctrine of creation. Thomas can only evade it by declaring that the creation of the world by God is a matter of faith.[128] Given these conditions, it is no surprise that while Thomistic thought indeed marks a shift from earlier Christian positions, there is still little trace of the broader natural philosophy of the Renaissance. The elevation of nature often appears more as a tactical maneuver, part of a well-considered theoretical strategy. This was not a lack of insight, but a worldview-driven necessity. Even with the greatest possible rehabilitation of sensibility on all levels, the dualism had to be maintained.

A general remark is in order here, one that has a key function for understanding the subsequent development. Since even the most "progressive" theological position regarding the problem of nature had to uphold dualism, it followed that any open or covert attack on dualism must, at least in the long term, endanger theology. This ceases to be a truism once we realize that cosmological dualism could be questioned not only from the side of nature, but equally from the side of and in the name of God. The real opponent of theology, then, was monism—whatever form it might take. In an age when the intellectual and worldly power of theology and the Church was ubiquitous, it was almost inevitable that monism would initially appear not as atheism, but on the contrary, as a radical theology with mystical-pantheistic traits of varied provenance. The deification of the world thereby led to

125 On Albertus's studies of nature, see Pieper, *Scholastik*, 157 f.; Gilson, *Études de la phil. méd.*, 117.

126 *Contr. Gent.*, I. II cap. III (= p. 92); *De Verit.*, Qu. XIV Art. IX ad 8 (= *Quaest. Disp.* I, 402).

127 Dijksterhuis, *Mechanisierung*, 146 f.

128 *Sum. Theol.*, I Qu. XLVI Art. II.

a dissolution of the divine person as a concrete, commanding instance—that is, as a prima facie locatable source of concrete norms and concrete authority: and it was precisely these norms and this authority that the traditional ecclesiastical conception of God aimed to defend. (Likewise, the spiritualization of the world led to a loss of what was distinctive about *spirit* as both essence and function, precisely by making it ubiquitous.) None of this was intentional; it was undertaken by Christians who believed they were rendering a service to their own faith. But the paradox emerged that, from this defense or reinterpretation of old contents, certain conceptual structures arose which stood in opposition to the ones with which those traditional contents had originally been associated. As a result, they could also pave the way for new substantive positions that depended on these new conceptual structures for their own articulation and rationalization. Put differently: conceptual structures that had emerged in the course of grappling with theological content—due to specific psychological and social factors—could, in different contexts, serve substantive purposes entirely opposed to those of theology. A spiritualist monism only needs to invert its signs to become a materialist one.[129] The importance of this point will become clear repeatedly in our analysis. Ultimately, a clear distinction between conceptual structure and content is an indispensable precondition for understanding the highly complex effects of ideas, as it allows insight into the mechanisms of the *heterogony of ends* even in this domain of human historical activity.

Let us now briefly trace the various forms by which monistic conceptual structures—those that became decisive for Renaissance natural philosophy—came into being, using a few typical examples. The doctrine of Cusanus is the most striking case, in which the radicalization of theology leads—though not intentionally, but as the orthodox opponents immediately suspected—[130]to its dissolution. The destruction of the Aristotelian-Thomistic worldview occurs here through an extreme intensification of the concept of God, which had

129 Characteristic is the portrayal of pantheistic currents of the Renaissance in Marxist-Leninist literature. See e.g. Wollgast, *Der deutsche Pantheismus*, esp. 151 ff., and Lemper, *Böhme*, esp. 119 ff., 150 ff.

130 Vansteenberghe, *Le "De ignota Litteratura" de Jean Wenck*, esp. 11 ff., 24 f., 29 f.

previously only found precedent in the mysticism of the 13th century.[131] The mediating instances of the (Neo-)Platonic tradition (world soul, universal intellect, etc.) are abolished, so that a direct link is established between God as the sole principle of things and every individual thing, between the Absolute and the empirical.[132] Precisely this immediate dependence of the individual thing on God renders it, insofar as it is situated in God, a unity—indeed, divine.[133] The absolute intensification of the concept of God, which admits no mediation, leads thus to the deification of individual entities. The schema of whole-parts replaces the notion of a hierarchically ordered universe. It is telling that Cusanus, precisely at the point where he seems to ascribe the harmony of the universe to an ascending scale of degrees, immediately adds that God is equally present at the top and bottom of this scale—He, as it were, encloses it within Himself.[134] The ontological basis of hierarchy—namely, the gradual emanation of things from God—is denied by the claim that all parts of the universe come into being simultaneously, and not, say, spirit first, then soul, etc.[135] The universe has no center,[136] and since hierarchy has been shattered, every individual thing—which is, in itself, whole (even if it is less perfect in relation to others)—[137]can place itself at the center and rejoice in its own uniqueness.[138]

These considerations nonetheless do not amount to an identity of God and world. For Cusanus distinguishes between the *complicatio* and the *explicatio* of God—that is, between the being of things in God and the being of God in things.[139] Since in God being and creating are one, the impression could arise that God is everything. But that is not

131 On Eckhart's influence on Cusanus, see Gandillac, *Nikolaus von Cues*, 88 f., 91 f., 340, 342, 347 f., 356, 361.

132 *Doct. Ign.* II, 9–10: "unum omnium principium deus in quo omnia et per quem omnia sunt" (= *Werke* I, 60). See the analysis by Rotta, *Il cardinale Niccolò di Cusa*, 332.

133 *Doct. Ign.* II, 3 (= *Werke* I, 43).

134 *Doct. Ign.* III, 1 (= *Werke* I, 72 f.); cf. II, 5 (= *Werke* I, 47).

135 *Doct. Ign.* II, 4 (= *Werke* I, 46); cf. II, 3 (= *Werke* I, 42), the passage: "una est ergo omnium complicatio..."

136 *Doct. Ign.* II, 11 (= *Werke* I, 61).

137 *Doct. Ign.* II, 2 (= *Werke* I, 41).

138 *Doct. Ign.* III, 1 (= *Werke* I, 72).

139 *Doct. Ign.* II, 3 (= *Werke* I, 42 f.).

the case: creation lies between being and nothingness;[140] it is only a *infinitum privativum*, whereas God is a *infinitum negativum*;[141] between these two *infinita* there exists no proportion.[142] Even more: things are nothing without God, but God also is without things.[143] Transcendence is thus expressly preserved, and one can, with good reason, interpret Cusanus' position as dualistic.[144] In what way Cusanus becomes entangled in logical difficulties because of this maintenance of transcendence, we shall not examine here.[145] More important for our context is identifying the reasons why he insists on transcendence—even at the cost of frequently presenting a lack of logical consistency as a deeper insight, as *docta ignorantia*. In short: it is consideration of the value-question (*Wertfrage*) that prevents Cusanus from a complete abolition of transcendence. By analogy with God, who is indeed in all things but does not mix with matter nor enters into it as a form,[146] man too forms a microcosm of the universe;[147] yet he rises above the sensible creation by virtue of *spirit*, which alone is the image of God.[148] Only the spirit is capable of endowing the world with value —*valor* is Cusanus' term—and only through it does man become godlike.[149] From this same attitude, Cusanus' epistemology follows.[150]

Cusanus does not autonomize nature, nor does he personify it.[151] Yet he outlines a monistic structure that will later serve precisely the personification and absolutization of nature. Another step in the same direction was the animation of the cosmos, which was at first still presented within the framework of a cosmological dualism in a rather lyrical-poetic mode: here we see how intellectual currents that, from a

140 *Doct. Ign.* II, 2 (= *Werke* I, 40).
141 *Doct. Ign.* II, 1 (= *Werke* I, 39).
142 *Doct. Ign.* II, 2 (= *Werke* I, 40).
143 *Doct. Ign.* II, 3 (= *Werke* I, 43).
144 This thesis was most convincingly argued by Vansteenberghe, *Le Cardinal Nicolas de Cues*, 305 ff.
145 See the good analysis by Hommes, *Die philos. Grundlehren des Nikolaus Kusanus*, 149 ff.
146 *Doct. Ign.* III, 2 (= *Werke* I, 74).
147 *Doct. Ign.* III, 3 (= *Werke* I, 75).
148 *De Mente*, IV (= *Werke* I, 245).
149 Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, 46.
150 *De Mente*, IV (= *Werke* I, 246).
151 Rotta, *Il cardinale*, 446.

purely logical standpoint, lie far apart are nonetheless eventually—independent of their respective original aims—subsumed under a newly conceived common denominator, merging together in the crucible of a different mode of thought. Ficino can be cited as an example of the tendency, within a (free) Platonism that sought to be understood as consistent with Thomistic church doctrine,[152] to develop spiritualist-panpsychist approaches that went well beyond it. One could already say, looking at the structure of his main work, that his thinking revolves entirely around the sharp distinction between spirit and sensuality—although this is tied to normative-moral principles. It forms both the basis and the goal of virtue[153] and also guarantees, in moral terms, the indispensable immortality of the soul, which due to its immateriality is directly related to God.[154] The cosmological implications of this dualism are obvious: God creates the world *ex nihilo*,[155] he moves and sustains it.[156] Proximity to God, the "highest spirit,[157]" depends in turn on the degree of materiality or immateriality of beings, which is taken as the standard for the construction of a hierarchy of being (*gradatio in essendo*).[158] It is precisely this idea of hierarchy, based on a strictly dualistic principle, that in key respects softens or even seems to dissolve that same dualism. The order of levels is not only the guarantor of ontological hierarchy but also an expression of ontological unity—a shared, all-encompassing framework in which oppositions lose their sharpness. The symbolic relationship of archetype and image also strengthens the ties between levels of being, but even more so does the need for mediation, which Ficino emphasizes.[159] At this important point, the monistic function of Ficino's spiritualism becomes evident.[160] For the soul is that mediating instance that connects all levels of being, the

152 On the question of Ficino's direct dependence on Thomas, see the detailed textual comparison in Collins, *The Secular is Sacred*, 116 ff.
153 *Theol. Plat.* VIII, 8 (= I, 298).
154 *Theol. Plat.* V, 10 (= I, 194 f.); cf. V, 13 (= I, 203 f.).
155 *Theol. Plat.* XVIII, 1 (= III, 175 ff.).
156 *Theol. Plat.* II, 7 (= I, 91 ff.).
157 *Theol. Plat.* XVIII, 2 (= III, 183): *spiritus supremus*.
158 *Theol. Plat.* II, 3 (= I, 80); XII, 7 (= II, 189).
159 Kristeller, *Die Phil. des M. F.*, 71, 76 f., 82 ff.
160 *Theol. Plat.* III, 2 (= I, 137 ff.).

higher and the lower, into a whole. But this activity of the soul stems from its divine origin and nature, and hence from its striving to be united with God. God, then, is ultimately the author of unity, since he himself is unity. And since he is also the highest good, the soul's striving for union with God is at the same time a striving for the good.[161] The unity of being thus bears the stamp of a radical theodicy. Everything is suffused by God's *vis vivifica et motrix*,[162] and although nature in itself lacks reason,[163] "*vivitur totum mundi corpus*.[164]" The spiritualization of the world becomes an affirmation of the world, because it rests on the belief that everything is beautiful and divine in itself. In other words, sensuality is rehabilitated via the detour of spiritualism and its symbolism. If it is seen as the image or symbol of eternal beauty and goodness, then any Christian-ascetic contempt toward it becomes unnecessary. Through Ficino's spiritualism, a life-affirming paganism resounds.

The natural philosophy of the late Renaissance variously absorbs the currents paradigmatically represented by Cusanus and Ficino, but it is not simply their product. The difference arises first from the distinct general orientation of the humanists of the 15th century versus the natural philosophers of the 16th century.[165] Added to this is the self-confident emergence of a radical Aristotelianism of a monistic-materialist orientation, which rebels against the orthodox Aristotelian separation of form and matter, or against the subordination of the latter, and thus comes into conflict with both Thomist-dualistic Aristotelianism and Platonism or Neoplatonism. For both of these, in their effort to preserve the supernatural-transcendent, maintain the strict separation between form and matter—a separation that, by

161 *Theol. Plat.* XIV, 1 (= II, 247).

162 *Theol. Plat.* IV, 1 (= I, 147).

163 *Theol. Plat.* XI, 4 (= II, 118).

164 *Comment.* VI, 3 (= p. 202). However, this does not mean an identity between God and world. Elsewhere, Ficino writes: "Nec per mundum Deus, sed mundus per Deum, quatenus potest, extenditur" (*Theol. Plat.* II, 6 = I, 88). According to Saitta, who most strongly (and partly excessively) emphasizes the pantheistic tendency in Ficino's thought, Ficino would only be willing to abolish the transcendent if nature and spirit were identical. Still, in Ficino, nature begins to appear as "incarnazione dello spirito" or as "obbietivazione di Dio" (*La filosofia di M. F.*, 92, 104).

165 Gentile, *Bruno e il pensiero del rinasc.*, 3 f.

various detours, aligned with the Platonic opposition between idea and empirical world and served not least as the basis for the desired compatibility of Aristotelianism (or Thomism) and Platonism.[166] While those striving for reconciliation promote a "healthy," i.e., dualistic Aristotelianism, an extreme anti-Aristotelian tendency aims to demonstrate that the separation of form and matter is absurd and that Aristotelianism as a whole, at least indirectly, must lead to materialism —thus placing itself in unintended agreement with radical Aristotelianism and inadvertently doing it a service. How complicated the situation becomes can be seen, for example, when we consider the relationship between Patrizzi—a somewhat belated Neoplatonic humanist—and Telesio. In his extensive polemic against Peripatetic philosophy, whose danger to Christian doctrine he emphasizes at the outset, Patrizzi rejects the separation of form and matter with at times astute arguments.[167] However, while his arguments at least imply that the solution to this problem must lie in a monistic direction, he does not seek to interpret Aristotelianism along these lines, but rather aims to demonstrate its philosophical uselessness. His own solution falls far short of the expectations raised by his critique of Aristotle—that is, it amounts only to a return to the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being, within which it is supposed to occur. The untroubled union of form and matter is to be a being that is both corporeal and incorporeal, and as such can mediate between the higher realm of the supersensible and the lower realm of the sensible. Yet the dualism of the supersensible/transcendent and the sensible/immanent is assumed and even emphasized. It is of no concern here whether this corporeal-incorporeal being, according to Patrizzi, is light or space.[168] The union of form and matter, in any case, takes place somewhere in the middle of the hierarchy of being, at the summit of which stands the

166 According to Cusanus, matter in itself is only *possibilitas*, namely *possibilitas contracta* (since *possibilitas absoluta* is God), "nec deo coaeterna" (*Doct. Ign.* II, 8 = *Werke* I, 54); Ficino also denies activity and form to matter (*Theol. Plat.* V, 4 = I, 177).

167 The relevant passages (from: *Discussionum Peripateticarum*, Vol. IV, Books II–III) are cited by Fiorentino, *Telesio*, I, 371 ff.

168 The former view is held by Kristeller (*Eight Philosophers*, 119 f.), the latter by Fiorentino (*Telesio*, I, 392 ff.). Cf. Ch. IV, note 9.

Unomnia,[169] which contains everything *seminaliter*[170] and generates the idea of the Good or the world-creating Son of God,[171] and at the bottom of which lies passive matter. The source of motion is only the incorporeal;[172] at the level of pure forms there is no matter (except perhaps as formal idea).[173]

The crucial difference between Patrizzi and Telesio lies in the fact that the former falls back on the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being in order to suspend, by mediating between its ontologically distinct extremes, the separation of form and matter halfway along the path—whereas the latter radicalizes the Aristotelian approach in a monistic-materialist direction, and thereby abolishes the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being in one stroke.[174] The (negative) agreement between the two in their critique of the Aristotelian separation of form and matter confirms our thesis that even within the loosely structured Neoplatonic intellectual framework, there existed monistic tendencies;[175] but

169 *Panardlia*, Book VII (= Rixner–Siber IV, 25).
170 *Panardlia*, Book IV (= Rixner–Siber IV, 23).
171 *Panardlia*, Books XI and XII (= Rixner–Siber IV, 28, 34).
172 Cited in Fiorentino, *Telesio* I, 392 note 1.
173 *Panardlia*, Book XIII (= Rixner–Siber IV, 39).
174 It is misleading to overlook this serious difference between Patrizzi and Telesio or to highlight only their shared rejection of Aristotelian form theory. Fiorentino does just that (*Telesio*, I, 370) in his effort to count Patrizzi among those who significantly contributed to overcoming the old cosmology. Hence he also treats Patrizzi's metaphysics as an alien element within his natural philosophy (*Telesio*, I, 406). Yet only the fundamentally different attitude of the two thinkers toward the hierarchy of being and the metaphysical presuppositions of natural philosophy can explain the fundamental difference between them, which Fiorentino himself formulates epigrammatically: "Telesio assumed matter; Patrizzi deduced it" (*Telesio*, I, 402). The same undifferentiated portrayal of Patrizzi's natural philosophy appears in Cassirer (*Erkenntnisproblem*, I, 214 ff.), who clearly follows Fiorentino. Contemporary observers, however, were quite aware of Telesio's modernity compared to Patrizzi—see, for instance, Bacon's comments on the two (*De principiis atque originis*, *Works* III, 85 and 114), as well as their direct juxtaposition (*Advancement of Learning* III, 4 = *Works* IV, 359), where Telesio is aptly said to have "turned the weapons of the Peripatetics against themselves." Bruno similarly expresses sympathy when speaking of the two in succession (*De la Causa*, III = *Opere* I, 202).
175 For this reason, (Neo-)Platonism soon proved dangerous, and the Church

Telesio's move is groundbreaking insofar as, though departing critically from Aristotelianism, it leads beyond the traditional philosophical constructions. Whereas those constructions viewed the immanent from the perspective of the transcendent as the source of motion and life, Telesio now seeks—as already indicated in the title of his major work—to investigate nature *juxta propria principia*, according to its own principles. In other words, Telesio's critique of the Aristotelian separation of form and matter results in the elimination of the gap between transcendence and immanence—a consequence entirely consistent, since the Aristotelian form had always preserved something—indeed, much—of the Platonic idea within itself. Telesio sees that the transcendence of the *primum movens* must make any truly autonomous, immanent activity of form impossible.[176] The radical turn in Telesio's thought occurs when, in defense of the immanent activity of form, he subverts the orthodox Aristotelian distinction between form and matter itself. For Aristotelian form exists only as the opposite of *privatio*, and it must lose its distinctive features if its counterpart is reconceived. Telesio does not accept that *privatio* is to be thought of merely as a *non ens*; it, too, must be granted existence and activity.[177] If form alone is to be the cause of motion and change, what need is there for matter at all? And how can the transformation of forms themselves—which are, after all, intrinsically well-defined—be explained without the intervention of another factor?[178] To avoid both horns of the Aristotelian dilemma (either the forms are moved from the outside, in which case they are ultimately passive; or they are active, in which case matter is superfluous), Telesio replaces the Aristotelian triad "matter–form–privatio" with the triad "matter–heat–

of the Counter-Reformation did not accept its useful services. See below, note 177.

176 *Rer. Nat.* IV, 20 (= II, 61). Cf. Fiorentino, *Telesio*, I, 218 ff.; Gentile, *Telesio*, 66 ff.

177 *Rer. Nat.* III (= I, 190). There, Telesio claims to be in agreement with the "Peripateticorum praestantissimis" on this point. That he was not alone in his radical Aristotelianism is indeed well attested. See the references cited by Fiorentino (*Telesio*, I, 220 note 2 and 221 note 1) to Porzio.

178 *Rer. Nat.* II, 1 (= I, 108 f.). Characteristically, Patrizzi not only criticized Telesio's sensualist epistemology but also his theory of the mutability of forms (*Fiorentino*, *Telesio*, II, 5 ff.).

cold,[179]" and calls the latter two *naturae agentes*.[180] These represent an antithetical pair that sets motion into play, and beyond that—what he considers a crucial advantage over fixed forms—they are capable of transforming into one another.[181] In comparison to their activity, matter "seems" to be passive.[182] But since motion is said to arise from heat, which in turn cannot exist without matter, the entire conceptual framework remains ambiguous and problematic. Equally problematic are Telesio's attempts to explain individual natural phenomena using his elementary terminology: these appear more like improvised exits from the dead ends of traditional natural philosophy. But this is not what is most important in Telesio. What truly matters is the fundamental connection between the principle of immanent motion and the rejection of the dualism between form and matter, or between idea and empirical world.[183]

Consequently, Telesio radicalizes Aristotelianism not only in cosmological terms but also in epistemological and anthropological respects. He identifies the contradiction between empiricism and intellectualism in Aristotle[184] and develops, for his part, a purely empiricist theory of knowledge.[185] In this context, he emphasizes the dependence of the human mind on sensuality[186] and rejects the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul as the form of the body,[187] while simultaneously attempting to solve the moral problem in a naturalistic way—that is, based on the principle of self-preservation.[188] All the more surprising, then, is his confession of adherence to Church doctrine, as expressed in the theses that God created the world[189] and that there also exists a second, higher soul in man, created by God,

179 *Rer. Nat.* I, 4 (= I, 18); III, 2 (= I, 181 ff.).
180 The term *formae* is also used, but now it bears the meaning it acquires within the new conceptual framework (*Rer. Nat.* II, 20 = I, 154 ff.).
181 *Rer. Nat.* I, 4 (= I, 19 ff.); I, 6 (= I, 24 ff.).
182 *Rer. Nat.* I, 5 (= I, 22 f.).
183 *Rer. Nat.* IV, 18–22 (= II, 54 ff., esp. 57, 61 f.).
184 *Rer. Nat.* VIII, 11–13 (= III, 116 ff.).
185 *Rer. Nat.* VIII, 1–4 (= III, 87 ff.); the cognitive functions in humans and animals are said to be fundamentally the same, VIII, 14 (= III, 127 ff.).
186 *Rer. Nat.* VII, 2 (= III, 2 f.).
187 *Rer. Nat.* V, 4–7 (= III, 105 ff.).
188 *Rer. Nat.* IX, 4 (= III, 199 ff.).
189 *Rer. Nat.* I, 9–10 (= I, 36 ff.).

which is the bearer of free or moral will, is the form of the body, and is immortal.[190] These theses have been interpreted as mere medieval remnants,[191] as signs of personal piety,[192] or as a prudent concession to the Inquisition.[193] In any case, this turn remains unmediated and theoretically unjustified; it exists alongside Telesio's natural philosophical expositions and barely touches them. Regardless of whether it was a confession of faith *malgré soi* or a tactical maneuver, it clearly reveals the moral-normative significance attached to the defense of spirit—both in the cosmos and in man. Social-institutional pressure and personal hesitation combine to turn the struggle against Church doctrine into a highly complicated and contradictory affair. This can also be observed in the case of Cardano, whose temperament alone shows little affinity with the Christian credo, as his autobiography[194] attests. His view of nature is very close to Telesio's and likewise results from a radicalized Aristotelianism.[195] Here, there is no talk of finely graduated emanations and elaborate classifications of spirits, but of stones, metals, plants, and animals—not of hierarchy, but of unity amid eternal motion and transformation. His profession of the core doctrines of the Church is not omitted, yet it stands beside the development of his own natural philosophical thoughts, without being logically deducible from them. We are told, indeed, that prime matter was created by God—but this is not Cardano's primary concern. Rather, it is to demonstrate that prime matter, whose existence is proven by the constant transformation of one thing into another, can never perish and is, although in relation to form only *potentia*, not deprived of all predicates, for it possesses at least quantity and thus

190 *Rer. Nat.* V, 2–3 (= II, 99 ff.); VIII, 15 (= III, 131 ff.).

191 So Fiorentino, *Telesio* I, 320.

192 So Gentile, *Telesio* 90.

193 The concrete reasons why caution was necessary can be read in Garin, *La cultura filosofica*, 442 ff.

194 *Opera*, I, 1–54. Even where Cardano professes his Christian faith, he characteristically speaks of the "Charybdis" of doubt (cap. XXII = loc. cit., 15a).

195 Cardano's adherence to Aristotelianism explains why, like Telesio, he does not question the geocentric thesis or the division of the cosmos into celestial and sublunar regions. In general, Cardano follows Telesio in recognizing matter, heat, and moisture as the three principles of the world—where heat is supposed to originate in the celestial region and moisture in the sublunar (De *Subtil.* Lib. II = *Opera* III, 373b = Rixner–Siber II, 25 and 35).

always exists *in actu* under some form. Movement, he says, does not originate in the soul, but in nature itself.[196] Similarly, we are told that man, as a creature of God, stands higher than the other beings—[197]but this is immediately relativized by pointing to the striking similarities between man and animal. Man is fundamentally regarded as a biological being who, in various geographic locations and with his relatively weak physical means, struggles for existence; differences of race, language, and culture are traced back to physical or social factors. Nature was not made for the sake of man, although he can exploit it.[198] A similar picture emerges with Cardano's theory of knowledge: although he allows the process of knowledge, which in its lower stages depends on the senses, to culminate in the intellect in its divine dimension,[199] he is far more eloquent when describing in detail the activity and function of the senses.[200]

A hermeneutic approach to Bruno's protean and therefore controversial work may only become possible when one recognizes in it the point of intersection of all three currents (radical theology, Neoplatonic panpsychism, and radicalized Aristotelianism) that, whether deliberately or not, undermined official theological cosmology. Taken as a whole, his work had to be marked by a double contradiction, since these currents contradict each other and are themselves internally contradictory. But not only this double contradiction, also their major common denominator—i.e., the monistic approach—is particularly evident in Bruno: therein may lie his intellectual-historical significance, though this need not imply any high estimation of the logical or substantive quality of his work. The monistic intent in Bruno is so strong that, with his impassioned emphasis on the thesis that, at bottom, there is only the One and nothing outside of it,[201] any deduction or explanation of empirical multiplicity becomes highly problematic. The deification of nature is curiously paired with a dismissive neglect of concrete natural phenomena, which, as such, hardly appear in his discourse. Bruno

196 *De Subtil.* Lib. I = *Opera* III, 358b–360a (= Rixner–Siber II, 22 ff.).
197 *De Subtil.* Lib. IX, XI = *Opera* III, 545a, 550b.
198 *De Subtil.* Lib. XI = 549a–550a, 551, 553 (= Rixner–Siber II, 186 ff.).
199 *De Variet.* Lib. VIII cap. XLII = *Opera* III, 156–160 (= Rixner–Siber II, 226).
200 *De Subtil.* Lib. XIII = *Opera* III, 570 ff. (= Rixner–Siber II, 215 ff.).
201 *De la causa*, V = *Opere* I, 247 ff.

remains within the humanist tradition, at least insofar as he works with texts rather than with phenomena.

Bruno begins his early work with Plotinus' doctrine of emanation, which he tellingly gives a similarly monistic turn as Ficino;[202] and in his later writings he again modifies Neoplatonism in such a way that he silently omits the gradual attenuation of the primal unity in the lower levels of being.[203] His relationship to Cusanus is also ambivalent: while he adopts the conceptual pair *complicatio* and *explicatio* and seeks mediation in the *coincidentia oppositorum*, he has little to say about the doctrine of creation.[204] Precisely because he remains influenced by Plotinus and Cusanus, despite major deviations, his critique of the Aristotelian separation of form and matter (which, for the reasons already discussed, is accompanied in his case as well by a rejection of the Platonic theory of ideas)[205] does not undergo the kind of materialist radicalization it does in Telesio. Here, the influence of emanationism—one could say similarly to Patrizzi—produces a unification of form and matter not from below, but as it were from above. Against the *forma substantialis*, Bruno notes that without matter it consists only of accidents;[206] thus, there is in fact only an *forma accidentalis*, since one should not define as substance something like form, which only realizes itself in composition with something else.[207] Only this composition can perish—not matter as such;[208] substance is

202 Vedrine, *La Conception de la Nature chez B.*, 109.

203 Michel, *La Cosmologie de B.*, 88. Noteworthy is Michel's remark (p. 78) that Bruno would sometimes present himself as the originator of his own monism by invoking Plotinus, and at other times by invoking Parmenides, because he vacillates between two different conceptions of the One. Cf. Olschki, *Bruno*, 33. The Renaissance's return to pre-Socratic monism in natural philosophy—as a way of avoiding Neoplatonic ambiguity or expressing a more radical stance—is also seen in A. Persio's statement that his teacher Telesio had in fact followed Parmenides (Garin, *La cultura filosofica*, 433).

204 Vedrine, *L'influence de Nicolas de Cues sur B.*, esp. 211 f., 217; *La conception de la Nature*, 70 ff.

205 "fantastiche idee di Platone," *De la Causa* IV = *Opere* I, 243, cf. 244 ("sigilli ideali, separati de la materia").

206 *De la Causa* III = *Opere* I, 210.

207 *De la Causa* II, IV = *Opere* I, 190, 245 f.; cf. *Acrot. Camoer.*, Art. X = *OL* I, 1, 105.

208 *De la Causa* IV = *Opere* I, 245.

thus rather matter, which constitutes a constant amid ceaseless transformation,[209] is infinite,[210] and can neither be created nor destroyed.[211] At this critical juncture, however, Bruno's vacillation—or rather his Neoplatonic legacy—becomes evident. To safeguard the infinity and indestructibility of matter, he reverts to Plotinus' distinction between incorporeal and corporeal matter,[212] attributing these qualities only to the former; only it is *actus*, in contrast to the passivity and perishability of corporeal, perceptible matter.[213] The identity of matter and (universal) form in the One[214] in turn implies two things: infinite matter contains or generates particular forms[215] and can be regarded as identical with creative nature;[216] but the same status must also apply to the *forma universalis*, which, as noted, is indistinguishable from infinite matter within the One, but in relation to finite matter represents the active moment.[217] Even though Bruno at one point says the activity of the universal form is conditioned in the generation of particular forms by the specific character of matter,[218] he remains at least halfway in that he replaces substantial forms with the universal form, or grants it—as world soul—a dual status: on the one hand, it acts immanently; on the other, it exists outside matter and directs it.[219] Accordingly, Bruno's theory of motion must also waver. In every body, a double movement is at work: its own finite movement and the divine one.[220] If the first mover disappears, the soul nevertheless remains the source of movement, so that the dual character of movement appears as a dual effect of the moving soul—in its absolute *essentia* and in its relation to the constitution of bodies.[221]

209 *De Immenso* III, 7 = *OL* I, 1, 372.
210 *De Immenso* II, 8 = *OL* I, 1, 283 f.
211 *Libri Physic.* = *OL* III, 311; cf. *De Vinculis*, *OL* III, 695 f.
212 *De la Causa* III, IV = *Opere* I, 207 f., 234, 239.
213 *De la Causa* IV = *Opere* I, 236 f.
214 *De la Causa* III = *Opere* I, 212 (cf. 222 f.).
215 Ibid.
216 *De la Causa* IV = *Opere* I, 241; *Acrot. Camoer.*, Art. X = *OL* I, 1, 104 f.
217 *De la Causa* II = *Opere* I, 180 f.; cf. *Sigillus* II = *OL* II, 2, 202 f.
218 "secondo la diversità delle disposizioni della materia e secondo la facoltà de' principii materiali attivi e passivi," loc. cit., 189.
219 Loc. cit., 181.
220 *De l'infinito* V = *Opere* I, 405.
221 *De Magia* IX = *OL* III, 461. On the entire complex of motion and soul

All this makes a complete identity of God and nature impossible for Bruno *a limine*. When he names God and nature in the same breath, it is with the qualification that nature is God only insofar as He is found in things, whereby He is referred to as the *natura naturans*.[222] Nature exists *in* and *above* finite things as *divina potestas materiam exagitans*,[223] and God likewise stands in and above nature. There is no doubt, however, that Bruno—on the basis of his monistic fundamental stance—strives for the greatest possible unity, and he does so not least in a *Cusan* fashion, by forcefully asserting the structural interconnection of macrocosm and microcosm as well as the omnipresence of God.[224] For our specific question and in view of the debates of the 18th century, Bruno's conviction is significant that monism—or the direct or indirect overturning of the traditional God—does not necessarily endanger morality, as long as it emerges in the form of a radically optimistic ontology (which fuses with or replaces radical theodicy). If the One is by definition identical with truth and goodness,[225] then morality may simply be understood as the soul's adaptation to the laws of the universe.[226] As for the reasons that kept Bruno from equating matter with the One, it is perhaps worth recalling that he refers to God not only as the intellect of the world soul but also to the intellect as the sun of the human soul.[227]

b) The Mathematical-Natural Scientific Model. The Worldview Decision Underlying It and Its Polemical Function

These, I hope, typical examples should provide insight into the diversity and heterogeneity of the currents that gradually, and by various detours, undermined the Aristotelian-scholastic cosmology.

theory, see the analysis by Vedrine, *La Conception de la Nature chez B.*, 198 ff.

222 *Spaccio* III, 2 = *Opere* II, 187, 192. "Deus naturaque universalis" are used synonymously in *De Immenso* II, 12 (= *OL* I, 1, 307).

223 *De Immenso* VI, 10 = *OL* I, 2, 193 (cf. VIII, 10 = *OL* I, 2, 312).

224 *Spaccio*, Ep. Espl. = *Opere* II, 9 ff.

225 *De Immenso* II, 12 = *OL* I, 1, 305; cf. *De la Causa* V = *Opere* I, 252.

226 "concorda gli suoi pensieri e gesti con la simmetria della legge insita in tutte le cose," *Eroici Furori* I, 3 = *Opere* II, 361.

227 Ibid. ("sole intelligenziale nell'anima"); on the intellect of the world soul, see *De la Causa* II = *Opere* I, 179.

Since it is well known that only mathematical natural science ultimately brought an end to the old cosmology, there is an understandable tendency to underestimate those other currents.[228] In fact, they often cut a rather poor figure—sometimes even appearing like antediluvian monsters—especially if one takes the question of method or the related issue of logical coherence particularly seriously, to say nothing of the survival of mystical-hermetic traditions within them.[229] Under such circumstances, one is naturally tempted to draw a straight line between the early forms of mathematical natural inquiry in the 14th century and the natural science of the 17th—bypassing the aforementioned currents—and to adopt the progress in the mechanization of the worldview as the sole criterion.[230] This formalistic analysis may indeed be legitimate on a purely logical level,

228 Olschki has extensively described the irreconcilable oppositions and logical gaps in Bruno's thinking. Olschki is undoubtedly right in this, and also right in opposing Dilthey's claim that Bruno represents his age as an ideal figure—instead, he embodies its contradictions (*Bruno*, 8). But this still does not exhaust the intellectual-historical significance of Bruno. To confuse that significance with the question of logical coherence is merely symptomatic of positivist-scientistic naivety. Massa has shown, with a good example, the indirect paths by which Bruno's work contributed to the dismantling of traditional natural philosophy (*Bruno's Ideas in 17th Century England*, esp. 231 ff.).

229 On this, see Yates, *Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, esp. 144 ff., 169 ff.

230 This straight line was first and most decisively drawn by Duhem, for whom the natural scientists of the 16th century "n'étaient, bien souvent, que des continuateurs et, quelquefois, des plagiaires" (*Syst. du Monde*, VII, 4). Nobis also proceeds in a somewhat one-sided way in his material-rich and interesting essays, tracing the earliest tendencies toward the mechanization of the worldview into the 17th century, without discussing the importance of broader intellectual-historical factors or the natural philosophy of the 16th century (*Die Umwandlung...*, esp. 41 ff., 54 ff.; *Frühneuzeitliche Verständnisweisen der Natur...*, esp. 42 ff., 48 f.). Maier has shown how misleading such a linear view can be, especially through her critique of Duhem, in which she emphasizes the importance of the respective "worldview framework" (*Vorläufer Galileis*, 1 ff.; see also note 197 below). Maier, however, still operates in a formalist mode, comparing two ideal-typical conceptions of nature rather than explaining the contradictions involved in the transition from one to the other; hence, the 15th and 16th centuries are almost entirely excluded from her investigations (cf. Luporini's comments, *La Mente di Leonardo*, 158 f., note 8).

but it only highlights one aspect of the matter and simplifies the actual historical process to the point of distortion. Moreover, it interprets that process teleologically—that is, from the perspective of fully developed mathematical natural science. The approaches of the 14th century stalled precisely because they lacked an independent worldview basis capable of freeing itself from theological constraints. Conversely, 17th-century natural science was able to emerge relatively quickly because the worldview question had by then been largely resolved. The conviction that nature, or more precisely, the sensible world, constituted a worthy—indeed, the highest possible—object of precise and final knowledge had become firmly established. As we shall shortly see, this conviction proved indispensable even for the application of mathematical methodology. Apart from certain individual insights (such as criticism of substantial forms and Aristotelian physics, or the thesis of the world's infinity) that generally benefited 17th-century science, the intellectual-historical contribution of the previously discussed currents—analyzed here as paradigmatic—consisted in the fact that they significantly advanced the clarification of the worldview question, albeit slowly, by conceiving of nature, to some extent and in various forms, as an autonomous whole.[231] This occurred not only directly, as in Telesio's case, but also indirectly: the weakening or elimination of dualism led to the very idea of an autonomous whole—and thus generated a conceptual structure that, in due course, could also be applied to what had previously been understood as "nature" in contrast to, say, God. It was this worldview-secured autonomy of nature that made it first capable and worthy of autonomous, i.e., supreme, knowledge—knowledge that no longer required theology. This elementary fact is bound to be overlooked in a formalistic analysis, and yet, without emphasizing it, the history of natural science itself can only be told in an incomplete way.[232]

231 Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 206, 208. It was Dilthey's merit to have emphasized the importance of pantheistic currents for the dismantling of the theological worldview (*Ges. Schr.* II, 283 f., 326 ff.). In this context, one might recall Galileo's defense of Cardano and Telesio, although it was more moral than scientific in character (*Saggiat.*, 9 = *Opere* VI, 236 f.).

232 "...the story of the birth of modern science cannot be fully told before inquiry is made into the causes of the rising tendency to see life in a 'dynamic' vision; before it is explained how the belief in the universe as an immovable, God-given order was overcome by the idea of a decentralized, infinite

A fundamental weakness of the aforementioned currents lay in their inability to develop a truly new, original language. Even their pathbreaking insights were, for the most part, expressed using (Neo-)Platonic or Aristotelian terminology—and since these, in turn, had a long theological prehistory, content-based compromises were in some cases already predetermined by the form itself. Recent scholarship has dispelled the legend that a refreshing Platonism liberated people during the Renaissance from the oppressive scholastic Aristotelianism. Platonism and Aristotelianism form the indispensable discursive framework of the long transitional period due to the lack of a third language, and in the variously nuanced terminologies of the two systems, both attempts at conservation and at renewal found expression. Their originally two-sided character made possible their dual function during the Renaissance, as well as divergences and alignments depending on context and adversary.[233] When in Platonism *χωρισμός* and *μέθεξις* stand in competition and the ontologically separated entities only come together through the activity of the World Soul, and when in Aristotelianism there exists a tension between its empiricist and intellectualist sides—between matter and form—then one could deploy the Platonic Idea and the Aristotelian form together against matter to defend dualistic-idealist positions.[234] Aristotelian intellectualism, especially in its Averroist form, approached Neoplatonic positions,[235] while in the realm of moral philosophy, the shared intellectualist tendency of both Platonism and Aristotelianism resulted in agreement on the primacy of the contemplative life ideal.[236] On the other hand, the split of Aristotelianism into an intellectualist and an empiricist wing—which

universe..." — Baron, *Evaluation of the 15th Century Renaissance*, 36.

233 Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought II*, 104 f.; Hönigswald, *Denker der ital. Renaiss.*, 54 ff.

234 A good example of this tendency in the circle of the Florentine Academy is Nicola da Foligno's treatise on ideas. See the analysis by Thorndike, *Science and Thought*, esp. 174 f.

235 Hönigswald, *Denker der ital. Renaiss.*, 56, 59.

236 Garin, *Der italien. Humanismus*, 154. For examples of the fusion of Platonism and Aristotelianism in aesthetics—where ontological and psychological questions also play a considerable role—see Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism*, 341 ff.

contemporaries also remarked upon—[237]allowed for a critique of the theory of Ideas and simultaneously a rejection of the alliance between Platonism and Aristotelianism from an empiricist standpoint. Telesio is one example of this, but so is Pomponazzi, who, from his naturalistic Aristotelianism, refuted Platonism, Thomism, and not least the intellectualist Aristotelianism of the Averroists with equal consistency.[238] A similar dynamic applies to the effects of the likewise dual-structured Platonism. Here, panpsychism could be mobilized against the Aristotelian separation of form and matter, which also served to blunt the original sharpness of the Platonic separation between Idea and world. The vigorous distancing of the post-Tridentine Church from Platonic panpsychism[239] is in itself a telling sign of its long-term influence. But when conservative Aristotelians pointed out this side of Platonism as dangerous to traditional theology, and when conservative Platonists in turn saw the main threat to religion in the empiricist strand of Aristotelianism, the dualistic position was, nonetheless, jointly undermined by both tendencies—despite their frequent mutual opposition. As noted, the logical ambivalence of Platonism and Aristotelianism enables this highly complex and often strange interplay; what sets it in motion and sustains it, however, is the need to give expression—lacking an independent conceptual language—to the worldview decision concerning the elevation of nature, using the available terminology ad hoc reinterpreted for the purpose.

Things are no less complicated when we consider the debates

237 See the remarks cited by Fiorentino, *Telesio* II, 53 note 1, from Andrea Cesalpino.

238 Douglas, *The Philos. and Psychol. of Pomponazzi*, 80 ff. The possibility of multiple combinations of thought-motifs depending on the opponent is illustrated by the fact that Pomponazzi allies with Thomism when opposing Averroist intellectualism (ibid., 147). Cassirer aptly observed that Pomponazzi sought to restore the authority of the biologist Aristotle over the metaphysician (*Individuum und Kosmos*, 148). On the materialist tendencies emerging from radical Aristotelianism, cf. Dynnik, *Vanini et l'aristotélisme de Padoue*, esp. 83 f., 85 f. On the dual relationship of Pomponazzi and Telesio to Aristotle, cf. Kristeller, *La tradizione aristotelica*, 29 ff.

239 For general background, see Luporini, *La Mente di Leonardo*, 81 ff. In light of these findings, the ecclesiastical condemnation of Patrizzi must be understood; see Firpo, *The Flowering and Withering...*, esp. 278.

around the increasingly central question of method in the 16th century. Here, the issue of the influences of Platonism and Aristotelianism intersects with that of the role of the humanists. The significance of the humanists' contribution to the elimination of scholastic-Aristotelian syllogistics as a method has been downplayed—indeed, called into question—ever since source research has made visible the full scope of the development and impact of non-scholastic Aristotelianism in the late Renaissance. Already during the 15th century, an Aristotelian current emerges that is emancipated from theology and that reaches its peak in the school of Padua.[240] For obvious reasons, it connects especially with medical and biological research. Beyond that, however, its promising contribution lies in the systematic elaboration of a method—drawing on the logical writings of Aristotle. Crucial steps toward the *resolutive-compositive* procedure already appear in the 15th century, whereby Aristotle's demonstrative method is transformed into a method of discovery. Zabarella synthesizes and extends these developments; he identifies logic with method, while at the same time separating it from ontology, considering it an order of knowledge rather than an order of being.[241] How closely these views aligned with mathematically oriented procedures can be seen from the fact that geometric deduction in the 16th century was often confused with Aristotelian deduction.[242] The clearest proof of the importance of this work by the Aristotelian school in the field of method is, however, the use that Galileo makes of Zabarella's insights.[243] But the broader significance of this emancipated Aristotelianism comes most vividly to light when Galileo, in a single brief text, speaks with the warmest praise not only for its logically-methodological aspect but also for its empiricist and anti-authoritarian dimension.[244]

If one considers the emergence of modern natural science from a formalist-scientistic standpoint, one tends to conclude that the

240 A good overview is provided by Schmitt, *Critical Survey and Bibliography*. A very positive assessment of Padovan Aristotelianism appears in Randall, *Paduan Aristotelianism*,

241 Randall, *The Development of Scientific Method...*, esp. 186 ff., 196 ff.

242 Schüling, *Axiomatische Methode*, 42 f.

243 *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 75 f.; *Discorsi e Dimostrazioni* III = *Opere* VIII, 212.

244 Letter to Liceti from Sept. 15, 1640 = *Opere* XVIII, 248 f.; cf. *Macchie Solari* II = *Opere* V, 138 f.

humanist movement had little to do with it—if it didn't in fact harm it.[245] This view seems confirmed by the fact that the humanists, concentrating primarily on rhetorical and philological research, left the sensitive domain of cosmology and natural science to the scholastics without a fight. Their repeatedly voiced aversion to natural science combined with the absence of systematically thought-out general positions within their ranks—and the fragmentation of their movement—meant that their loud protests against authority damaged the ecclesiastical Aristotelianism but could not seriously threaten it.[246] Indeed, scholasticism did not shrink under the blows of humanism; it actually experienced a late flourishing in the 15th and 16th centuries, so that (neo-)scholasticism and humanism should not be seen as temporally successive, but rather as parallel phenomena.[247] Still, these observations do not exhaust the problem of the intellectual-historical function of humanism. Nor is it resolved by pointing to the editorial work of humanists who brought ancient mathematical texts back to light, thereby helping the mathematical approach of Platonism to break through or reviving methodological debates.[248] The real question is whether the general worldview and long-term effect of humanism contributed—directly or indirectly—to the formation of those fundamental decisions which also enabled the rise of mathematical natural science. This question, of course, is not even asked by those who, from their formalist perspective, trace the development of method without attending to its presuppositions. But once it is asked, it must also be answered in the affirmative. Although the humanist movement did not oppose Christianity per se (though the example of Valla shows that the relationship with the Church was not always untroubled), it cannot be understood as essentially a religious movement or as a reactionary religious answer to secular trends—[249]it must rather be counted among the currents of

245 So Thorndike, *Science and Thought*, 12 f.; Randall, *The Development of Scientific Method*, 178 f.

246 Kristeller, *Humanismus und Renaissance*, I, 46 f., 93 ff.

247 Prantl rightly spoke of a "rich afterglow" of scholastic logic—or of scholasticism in general—during the Renaissance (*Gesch. d. Logik*, IV, 173 ff.).

248 Schüling, *Axiomatische Methode*, 35 ff.; Dijksterhuis, *Mechanisierung des Weltbildes*, 250 f.

249 Above all, Toffanin attempted to portray the humanist movement as a

secularization.[250] Since within the worldview of modern rationalism the elevation of nature and the elevation of the individual go hand in hand, the humanist glorification of the sovereign human being eo ipso encouraged that disposition which, through scientific effort, sought the liberation of man from old domination—or his domination *over* nature—and which saw in method the irresistible power of human intellect at work. Humanism, for all its detours and contradictions, opened up the subjective world, while natural science asserted the objective world—both developments ultimately reinforcing the turn toward immanence.[251] With regard to the long-term intellectual consequences—and leaving aside individual intentions or sympathies—it is relatively unimportant that humanism and nascent science mostly stood apart or even in opposition to each other. We have already seen that in cosmology, Platonic panpsychism and radical Aristotelianism, despite their opposition, had comparable effects. Humanism enacts the turn toward immanence above all through its insistent demand for existential intensity and immediacy. This forms the starting point—or the moral justification—for the humanist attack on scholastic syllogistics, in which emerged that polemical, unjustly reductive identification of scholasticism with abstract syllogism—[252]a caricature that, as we will see, also becomes typical of the Enlightenment. A key expression of the demand for existential immediacy is the humanist

Christian-spiritualist reaction against anti-religious and science-friendly tendencies such as Averroism—most extensively in his *Geschichte des Humanismus*, passim.

250 Cf. Kristeller's balanced judgment, who rightly criticizes both Toffanin's thesis and Nardi's one-sided emphasis on Renaissance Aristotelianism (*Changing Views...*, esp. 37 ff., 40, 41 f.).

251 On this, see Gadol's valuable remarks, *Die Einheit der Renaissance*, esp. 396 f., 426. The contemplation of nature and the contemplation of the human are structurally interconnected in terms of worldview and must mutually influence one another. In an important study, Stürner has shown that already in the 12th–14th centuries, the approach to the autonomization of nature was accompanied by the approach to the autonomization of human action in contemporary political philosophy: human forces and motivations are considered in their immanent rootedness (*Natur und Gesellschaft im Denken des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters*, esp. 185 ff., 218 ff.).

252 On the humanist labeling of scholastic syllogistics as "barbarism," etc., see Garin, *La cultura filosofica del rinascimento*, 466 ff.

(e.g., Valla's) contrast between logic and rhetoric, since the latter's subject—since Aristotle and Cicero—was the human being in the full richness of his emotional and malleable nature. The emphasis on experience or on "things" as opposed to logical abstractions (e.g., in Vives) also stems from this demand for immediacy and leads eventually to the anti-scholastic separation of logic and ontology—a move we also observed in Zabarella.[253] It is plausible that the humanist discrediting of scholastic syllogistics created the intellectual climate in which the Aristotelians, emancipated from theology, saw themselves compelled—indeed, obligated—to assign a different status and a new, more "living" function to Aristotelian logic according to modern standards, in order to give it a chance of survival and to demonstrate the continuing vitality of Aristotelianism in general.

The process by which the mathematical method became dominant in natural science confirms the thesis that Platonism and Aristotelianism formed the discursive framework of the transitional period—or more precisely, that certain aspects of them only became effective as weapons against traditional theology once they were animated by a novel underlying worldview. However, their integration into a new conceptual structure simultaneously led to their atrophy. Moreover, the gradual crystallization of the new worldview in both expression and content caused Platonism and Aristotelianism to die off as comprehensive systems of thought, despite their continued selective appropriation within new contexts and for new needs. Whatever panpsychism and radical Aristotelianism may have contributed to the undermining of theological dualism, the cosmological model of mathematical natural science eliminated both in one stroke. Even the elevation of mathematics during the transitional period typically occurred with reference to Platonism, which has led some scholars to hastily conclude that this elevation was merely a revival of the Platonic tradition in opposition to dominant scholastic Aristotelianism. Clearly, that's an oversimplification. Platonism's fondness for mathematics had existed for nearly two thousand years—much of that time in intellectually dominant positions—without

253 Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 98 ff. Rhetoric held a very different status in medieval intellectual life, and its reevaluation by humanism was, not least, an expression of substantive oppositions to scholasticism. See Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 178 ff., 218 f., 226 ff.

having ever produced a mathematical physics. The decisive union of mathematics and physics became possible only on the basis of a new conviction or decision: namely, that nature was a worthy and intelligible object of knowledge—structured in such a way as to be fully penetrable by method and reason. In the theological position (whether of Platonic or Aristotelian color), the *certitudo obiecti* held primacy over the *certitudo modi procedendi*. That meant two things: God, as the most certain object of knowledge by definition, guaranteed *ipso facto* the highest and most secure kind of knowledge—even if human, finite cognition lacked a fully reliable, worldly-rational method to access this supreme object. Conversely: nature, due to its ontological inferiority, could not provide the highest knowledge—even if the most perfect methodological tools were available for it. It's therefore easy to see the worldview underlying the heated debates that emerged in the 16th century over the question of whether the *certainty of the object* or the *certainty of the method of procedure* mattered more—a debate that, by the early 17th century, increasingly led to the conclusion that certainty of method should in fact be ranked higher.[254]

This conclusion, however, entails a demotion of theological metaphysics—whose dignity rested on the dignity of its object—and correspondingly an elevation of physics. Why the decision in favor of *certitudo modi procedendi* had to be accompanied by an elevation of physics and the simultaneous application of mathematics to it becomes clear when we consider that, given the widespread conviction that mathematics was the most certain method, there was no other path to a definitive rehabilitation of nature than applying mathematics to physics. One must keep in mind that the theological tradition—both Augustinian and Thomistic—never denied the thesis that mathematics offers the highest degree of epistemic certainty,[255] though during the critical disputes of the 16th century theologians were careful to emphasize that this evaluation applied solely to the *mode of knowledge*, not to the *object of being* (i.e., not to the *certitudo obiecti*).[256] What was

254 References in Schüling, *Axiomatische Methode*, 76 f.

255 Typical passages in Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* II, 8 § 21 = *PL* 32, 1251 f.; Thomas, *In libr. Poster. Analyt. Expos.*, Lib. I, Cap. I, Lect. I, 10, and Cap. XXXI, Lect. XLII, 3 (= *Opera* I, 140, 310).

256 According to a formulation by the Jesuit Pererius; cited in Schüling, *Axiomatische Methode*, 48.

forcefully contested, however, was the possibility of applying mathematics to physics—precisely because of the Christian doctrine regarding the ontological inferiority of the natural and the sensory. As Thomas puts it, natural science can never attain final, fully secure knowledge, because its object is itself in motion—that is, unstable and uncertain.[257] By contrast, mathematics does not concern itself with perceptible matter or motion; it stands, therefore, above physics—but below theology.[258] Yet it is precisely this intermediate position of mathematics that renders the profession of its supreme epistemic certainty ultimately hollow. One can do little with it: on the one hand, theology—occupying the higher ground—has no real need of mathematics (which, according to Thomas, still clings to the sensible, since it abstracts from it); on the other, mathematics, due to its asserted superiority over physics, remains without a firm object—suspended, as it were, in midair. From this account of the theological position, it becomes clear what the core of the opposing view was: not the defense of mathematics' highest epistemic certainty, which no one really doubted, but the elevation of nature itself—through the demonstration that mathematics is applicable to physics because nature, despite its changeability, is logically structured and mathematically intelligible, thus worthy of the highest and most definitive form of knowledge.

The importance of the *worldview decision* to elevate nature for the advancement of mathematical natural science becomes evident when we recall the constraints within which attempts at a mathematical interpretation of nature between the 12th and 14th centuries had to operate. Inspired by the (Neo)Platonic valuation of mathematics and also influenced by biblical and Plotinian light metaphysics, mathematical explanatory efforts were mainly undertaken in the field of optics. Yet even within this (Neo)Platonic framework—just as within Aristotelian classifications—optics (alongside astronomy and music) remained one of the *mathematica media*, that is, one of the mathematical disciplines which, due to their application to natural phenomena, were

257 *De Trinit.*, Qu. V, Art. II ad 4 (= *Opusc.* III, 107 f.).

258 *De Trinit.*, Qu. V, Art. III ad 6 (= *Opusc.* III, 115). On the position of mathematics between theology and physics in Aristotle, see *Metaph.* 1026a6–32, 1061a28–1061b32; *De Caelo* 306a6–18. For (the later) Plato as well, mathematics —which remains tied to the sensible—stands below dialectic (*Politeia* 510b–511d).

considered neither pure mathematics nor genuine physics. The mathematical analysis of phenomena remained, so to speak, beyond the phenomena themselves—which also explains why its practitioners paid only marginal attention to experimental verification of their theses. Their focus lay more on questions of method, and the discussion of method again served the fundamental clarification of the relationship to the theological cosmology, so that the priorities typical of the theological intellectual framework remained untouched. Rather than forming the point of departure for a new development, these methodological investigations would have led into a final dead end (and indeed, during the 15th century, they largely did), had Galileo and his contemporaries not redirected the pursuit of knowledge altogether.[259] Yet it was not merely a shift in worldview that was lacking when the methodological insights developed between the 12th and 14th centuries remained largely unused in practice. This is evident, for instance, in the case of induction, which had already been theoretically worked out and seriously discussed at an early stage. The main obstacle to its scientific application was the theologically grounded conviction that physics had to do without measurement—or that precise measurement was in principle impossible, or reserved to God alone—because concrete nature could not be reduced to mere quantity and always contained something unpredictable. In other words, the natural philosophers of the 14th century did not presume

259 Crombie, *Augustine to Galileo* II, 129, 126 f., on early approaches to mathematical natural science in the 12th–14th centuries; I, 46 ff., II, 97 ff. It is surprising that the same Crombie, who offers a nuanced picture of the overall development in these passages, also wrote the blunt sentence: "the natural philosophers of Latin Christendom in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries created the experimental science of modern times" (*Grosseteste*, 290). Yet he also notes that the second wave of the scientific revolution not only had a methodological-theoretical dimension, but also a purely experimental one, and thus a much closer connection to nature than the first wave (in the 12th–14th centuries), which was more concerned with general methodological reflections; between the two waves, there is also a chronological gap (*Grosseteste*, 295 f.). These observations are incompatible with the thesis of a linear development. Crombie's position is interesting because it reflects an unconscious oscillation between a formalist and a historical view. Crombie senses the importance of worldview factors (he speaks of "direction of interest," *Augustine to Galileo* II, 128, 129), but leaves it at that.

the sovereign disregard for the qualitative diversity of concrete nature that their 17th-century successors took for granted.[260] It may sound paradoxical, but it is in fact the case that the ontological and worldview-based elevation of nature required, as a consequence, a certain *contempt* for that very nature in its qualitative multiplicity—for only its elimination, i.e. only the quantification of nature, could make it fully calculable and therefore a worthy object of highest knowledge. This was the true rupture. The earlier approaches retain their full significance, especially if one analyzes the development from a purely logical-formal perspective. Yet their revival and practical application—and thus also their reinterpretation and transformation—after their dormancy in the 15th century was only made possible by the clarification of the *worldview question*, which itself occurred by many detours. Otherwise, they would likely have shared the fate of many valuable insights from the Hellenistic era, which remained buried for centuries.

The inability of the (Neo)Platonic mathematical approach to bring about the rupture on its own initiative is evidenced not only by its long, scientifically unproductive prehistory, but also by its near-total absorption into the number mysticism and numerological magic of the Renaissance. This widespread current is characteristic of the transitional period in two respects. First, from its refusal to view empirical nature as such—that is, without admixture of supernatural agencies—as the highest possible object of knowledge, there follows not only a wavering between monism and dualism, but also a clinging to traditional language, which, under pressure from the need for a new

260 On the problem of measurement and the use of induction, see Maier, *Metaphysische Hintergründe*, 397 f.; on the first introduction of mathematical methodology, see the same, *An der Grenze von Scholastik und Naturwissenschaft*, 257 ff. Maier explicitly uses the term *Grundhaltung* ("fundamental attitude") here (276, note 50) to explain the lack of practically physical application of the essentially known inductive method. Even Grosseteste considered precise measurement in physics impossible (Crombie, *Grosseteste*, 100 ff.; on inductive and deductive procedures in the 12th century, see 25 ff., 34 f., 61 ff.). The distrust of generalizing individual cases—and thus of the idea of uniformity in nature—which Crombie (*Grosseteste*, 293) uses to explain the non-application of induction, amounts to the dominance of qualitative contemplation, since only thorough quantification enables the logically consistent concept of uniformity.

one, becomes all the more muddled. In that conception of nature which employs number mysticism, nature does indeed participate in the supernatural (and in this sense the step toward the elevation of nature and toward monism is taken), but at the same time it remains in its shadow: it is its hieroglyph or symbol. The investigation of nature thus amounts to the deciphering of a hieroglyph, which in turn is supposed to lead toward the unveiling of "true" being. But this is not the mathematically articulated regularity operating invisibly within the empirical, but rather the ontic substratum understood as the substantial source of the unity and harmony of being; not abstract lawfulness, but the substantive ground constitutes the basis of the magically apprehended unity of the world.[261] Accordingly, the task of numerology in the magical procedure is not to formulate laws for a quantified world, but to intuit the secret ratio or proportionality that is an effect of the substantive ground and in which the world—despite the diversity of its qualities—is ultimately harmonious. The conviction that empirical nature has a supernatural background (however closely linked with it) and thus cannot be an autonomous and final object of knowledge, once again obstructs its complete quantification and hence the implementation of the new mathematics. For once nature is completely quantified, no background to the empirical remains other than abstract, that is, non-hypostatizable lawfulness—even if one posits God as its author: then God's activity would be rationally transparent, and the deciphering efforts of magical numerology would be left without an object. It might be hermeneutically appropriate to view Kepler's development and distancing from numerology in this light. If, especially in his early work, the (Neo)Platonic-religious faith in the inner harmony of the universe[262] animated his research, this harmony soon transformed in his thought into the clearly conceived concept of law, as he emphasized—against number mysticism—the necessity that mathematics be bound to empirical analysis, no longer

261 Cf. Hönigswald's remarks on Cardano in *Denker der ital. Renaiss.*, 99 f. A similar structure of thought is also found in Cusanus, whose relationship to magic may not be particularly close (see nevertheless Thorndike, *History of Magic*, IV, 337 ff.); in him too, faith in mathematics is restrained. See Gandillac, *Nicolaus von Cues*, 153, 165, 167 f., 170 f.

262 On Kepler's Christian inspiration in general, see Hübner, *Naturwissenschaft als Lobpreis des Schöpfers*, esp. 337, 339 ff., 346.

regarding the empirical as a kind of "lower" reality in the theosophical sense.[263] With this elevation of the independent epistemic value of empirical reality comes the dissolution of its former substantial background which nourished magical natural philosophy; for example, Kepler wants to see in the Platonic ideas only archetypes in the sense of mathematical relations.[264] In doing so, he simultaneously asserts the full, so to speak direct, knowability of the completely quantified and thereby disenchanted universe made accessible to the new mathematics: since mathematical laws are knowable, indeed inscribed within human reason itself, human knowledge thereby approaches divine knowledge.[265]

The same line of thought appears in its purest and most consistent form in Galileo, especially since—by his own account—the search for hidden harmonies or the aesthetic-religious (Neo)Platonic motif plays hardly any role for him.[266] At the center of his reflections stands rather the elimination of the old metaphysical foundation of the empirical world—namely, the concept of substance.[267] In light of our

263 See the analysis by Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 347 ff. It is characteristic that even Kepler's conviction of the inner logic of nature appears in religious form as belief in the perfection of God's works: chance in nature would for him be "nihil aliud nisi contumelia summi et omnipotentis Dei" (*De Stella Nova* XXVII = *GW* I, 284). Here we see how fluid the transition was from a Platonically religious idea of harmony to the scientific concept of natural law—so much so that the decisive step toward the latter could be taken without disrupting the researcher's religious convictions. (We will return to the psychologically plausible and reassuring reinterpretation of Christian topoi in terms of the new science later in this section. See also note 307.) Likewise with Kepler, as with Galileo or already Leonardo, the conviction of an inner logic of nature—or its ontological valorization—is paired with the epistemological valorization of experience: *a priori speculationes* should be reconciled with experience, we read in a letter to Hohenburg from July 12, 1600 = *GW* XIV, 130.

264 *Harmonices Mundi* IV, 1 = *GW* VI, 216.

265 Letter to Hohenburg from September 14, 1599 = *GW* XIV, 73.

266 *Saggi*, 38 = *Opere* VI, 319; against number mysticism, *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 35.

267 *Dialogo* II = *Opere* VII, 260 f.; the elimination of the concept of substance in the investigation of physical phenomena is evident, for example, in *Macchie solari* III = *Opere* V, 187 f. For Galileo, it is self-evident what the only legitimate subject of rational or serious thought can be: "proprio oggetto della filosofia" is "il gran libro della natura," *Dialogo*, *Epist. Ded.* = *Opere* VII, 27.

earlier discussion, it should be understandable why the elevation of nature initially occurred by way of prioritizing the *certitudo modi procedendi* over the *certitudo obiecti*; and this is also the case with Galileo.[268] Caution was required, since behind that *obiectum* ultimately stood God himself. But once this *obiectum* was rendered practically irrelevant—despite all the pious or dutiful professions of respect—the effort then focused primarily on conferring upon the new highest object of knowledge, to which the supposedly self-justifying *modus procedendi* was now to refer, the same dignity as the old. Eventually, it is openly asserted—by Galileo most eloquently—that nature, just like the former supreme object of theological metaphysics, can grant the desired *certitudo* to the *modus procedendi* precisely because it is itself logically structured, i.e. because it constitutes a perfectly ordered whole,[269] acts with necessity, never violates its own laws,[270] uses the simplest means,[271] etc. etc. Following the (tacit) elimination of the metaphysical-substantial foundation of nature, its elevation in the sense described was to be expected. For it was in comparison to that foundation that nature or empirical reality had seemed ontologically inferior, irrational, and unpredictable. Since that is no longer the case —since its very essence is now characterized by simplicity and necessity—mathematics, which is defined by the same qualities, becomes the self-evident *modus procedendi* of natural science—whose certainty ultimately rests on the stable logical structure of this new highest and dignified object of knowledge. In a direct polemical turn against the Aristotelian view, Galileo himself draws the connection between the logical constitution of nature and the scientific use of mathematics,[272] while elsewhere he states that matter can be treated mathematically because it is unchanging.[273] Tied to these theses is also his conviction that man can know with the same certainty and

268 *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 128 f. The subject of theology may be higher, but the certainty of science is greater, we read in the long letter to the Grand Duchess of Tuscany from 1615 = *Opere* V, 324 f.

269 *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 43. This shows that even the analysis of specific natural phenomena, such as motion, proceeds from the general thesis of the inner logic of nature

270 Letter to Castelli, December 21, 1613 = *Opere* V, 283.

271 *Discorsi e Dimostrazioni* III = *Opere* VIII, 197.

272 *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 38.

273 *Discorsi e Dimostrazioni* I = *Opere* VIII, 51.

precision as God—though, to be sure, human knowledge remains far more limited in extent than divine knowledge.[274]

The defense of the mathematical ideal of knowledge in natural science is thus, even in Galileo, closely tied to the ontological elevation of nature. This is why simply pointing to his "Platonism" is far from sufficient when trying to explain his mathematical orientation. Galileo often cites Plato when arguing against his scholastic-Aristotelian opponents for the application of mathematical method in the realm of physics.[275] But in doing so, he is merely trying to historically justify and support his own approach; he invokes Plato in a very general sense and sees him—just like his teachers and intellectual circle did —[276]more as a grand symbol of the mathematics-friendly tradition than as the representative of a comprehensive system of thought from whose internal logic the elevated status of mathematics necessarily follows. As ontology and metaphysics, Platonism was not only unfamiliar to Galileo in its particulars but also irrelevant to him. The example of Hobbes—who also praises Plato's fondness for mathematics,[277] even though his own philosophical position stands at the antipodes of Platonism and he otherwise has little good to say about Plato—[278]clearly shows how free (and polemically anti-scholastic) such appeals to the mathematical side of Platonism were, and how little they suffice to actually call someone a Platonist—at least if we're to take that word seriously. More than that: we must recognize that only the (unconscious) rejection of Platonic ontology made the (conscious) invocation of the mathematical Plato possible—and

274 *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 128 f.

275 *Frammenti* = *Opere* VIII, 613 f.; *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 35.

276 Koyré, *Études galiléennes* III, 117 ff.; *Metaphysics and Measurement*, 35 ff. Koyré rightly emphasizes the identity of mathematics and ("true") Platonism as it appears in Galileo's perspective, but he himself makes the mistake of highlighting only the mathematical component in Platonism, which leads him to present Galileo as an absolute Platonist without further differentiation. Yet the distinction between magical and mathematical Platonism, which Koyré—rightly—emphasizes against Burtt (see note 226 below), is not sufficient for an adequate overall interpretation; for a distinction must also be made between the role of mathematics in Platonic metaphysics and in the modern scientific context.

277 *Leviathan* XLVI = *EW* III, 668; *Six Lessons* VI = *EW* VII, 346.

278 *Leviathan* XXXI = *EW* III, 357.

productive. This means, as we already know: only the modern elevation of nature allowed for the realization of Plato's project of a mathematical science of nature. For Plato himself, nature, as a lower level of being, contains something irrational and contingent within it; the reign of necessity within it is not total, and even mathematics applied to physics can at best yield only the probable. Despite his opposition to Aristotle regarding the use of mathematics in physics, Plato stands much closer to Aristotle than to the great natural scientists of the 17th century when it comes to the decisive question of to what extent this use can yield truly certain results.[279]

The aforementioned binding of the *certitudo modi procedendi* (certainty of method) to the *certitudo obiecti* (certainty of the object), along with the simultaneous redefinition of the latter, was at first not openly propagated—partly out of traditional reverence for the old divine object of knowledge, partly out of immediate fear of its earthly representatives. Yet it was logically and ideologically inevitable. The Copernican turn already bears its mark, where belief in the simplicity and logical structure of nature goes hand in hand with belief in simplicity as a necessary virtue of scientific explanation. Not only does Copernicus consider fixed symmetry the most important aspect of

279 Shapere has rightly emphasized this in his critique of Koyré's undifferentiated view of Galileo's Platonism (*Descartes and Plato*, 575). As some passages from the *Timaeus* (46e, 53b, 56c) show, Platonic necessity does not cover the entire domain of nature, and accordingly, the work of the Demiurge can only be perfect within certain limits. Platonic nature "contains an essentially irrational element: nothing in it can be described exactly by reason, and in particular by mathematical concepts and laws; and any deviations from those concepts or laws are inherently inexplicable. True, mathematics enables us to deal fairly well with this world; but still it gives only a 'likely story.' In regard to this view modern science is profoundly anti-Platonic: it rejects the characteristically Platonic view that nature cannot be explained completely by scientific or mathematical laws" (Shapere, 574). In interpreting the Platonic position, Shapere draws on a scholar of Plato as eminent as Cornford (*Plato's Cosmology*, 162 ff.). Cassirer, who elsewhere usually emphasizes the Platonic element in early natural science, also points out that the full application of mathematics required a shift in worldview—expressed in the separation of *scientia* from *sapientia* in place of the traditional subordination of the former to the latter (*The Originality of the Renaissance*, 51). On the difference between Plato and Galileo, see also Crombie's useful remarks (*Augustine to Galileo*, II, 152).

nature,[280] and praise its cleverness in producing many effects from one cause,[281] but for him the "*ratio ordinis et mundi totius armonia*" ("rational order and the harmony of the entire cosmos") forms a decisive argument for the heliocentric hypothesis.[282] What troubled him about the Ptolemaic system was its ever-increasing complexity, which clashed with his mathematical sense of harmony (and mathematics at the time primarily meant geometry) as well as with his conviction about the essential nature of the cosmos. His attempt was thus an interpretation aimed at simplicity and symmetry—one that, in many key respects, amounted to little more than a reworking of the Ptolemaic model from the standpoint of heliocentrism.[283] Kepler even remarked that Copernicus had interpreted Ptolemy more than nature.[284] The phenomena known at the time could, after all, also be explained via the Ptolemaic system,[285] and Copernicus didn't even succeed in drastically simplifying it—[286]let alone offering a physical explanation of the planetary motions he described mathematically (that only came with Newton).[287] All the more striking, then, is his striving for a new interpretation marked by simplicity, and its purely *weltanschaulich* (ideological/worldview-driven) roots. For Copernicus made no major new observations, relying instead on older data.[288] His stance must therefore be derived from the inner ideological core of the new mode of thought—[289]one in which, as said, the simplicity of

280 *De revolutionibus*, Epist. ded. = p. 5: "rem ... praecipuam, hoc est mundi formam ac partium eius certam symmetriam."

281 *De revolutionibus* I, 10 (= p. 24).

282 *De revolutionibus* I, 9 (= p. 21); cf. I, 10 (= p. 26).

283 Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, 28; Dreyer, *History of Astronomy*, 342 f.; Hall, *The Scientific Revolution*, 63.

284 *Astronomia Nova* II, 14 (= *GW* III, 141).

285 Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*, 180; Hall, *The Scientific Revolution*, 65 f.

286 Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*, 170; Dijksterhuis, *Mechanisierung*, 327.

287 Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*, 121, 153; Hall, *The Scientific Revolution*, 67 f., 102; Butterfield, *Origins*, 30 f.

288 Dreyer, *History of Astronomy*, 310.

289 In his provocative and therefore fruitful book for later research, Burtt pointed to the Neoplatonic-Pythagorean cult of mathematics as the spiritual source of the Copernican turn, as well as to the importance of religious-worldview motives for the emergence of modern science (on Copernicus, see pp. 43 f.). The connection is, in general, undeniable, and it is to Burtt's credit

nature and the simplicity of its explanation go hand in hand. The simplicity of the explanation is meant to express the heightened, direct power of the intellect, now directed toward nature; it thus signifies an elevation of the subjective side, just as the simplicity or logicality of nature itself expresses the elevation of the objective side, now treated as the highest possible object of knowledge. This factor of "existential intensity," or feeling of power, as previously noted, was represented within the orientation of the modern intellect by the search for what is alive and immediate. This closely ties into the preference for what is simple, self-evident, or instantly graspable—where rationalism seems to rely on a kind of eidetic concept of *logos*. Simplicity becomes both a

that he emphasized it so strongly. But I believe he draws it too immediately. He misses a crucial element by treating the worldview factor in an undifferentiated way—that is, without considering its polemical edge against a rival worldview. The scientific achievement of Copernicus cannot simply be derived from his Platonism, even though this was a subjective precondition. Platonism already had a long history behind it, during which the Ptolemaic worldview was hardly questioned, and many Renaissance natural philosophers were just as Platonist or Neoplatonist as their contemporary Copernicus, without reaching his methods or conclusions. In fact, Platonism could not open new perspectives unless it consciously or unconsciously fused with the spirit of the new worldview orientation. What matters here is not Platonism in itself, but the version of it that could most effectively convey this new spirit. The new worldview position was decisive (in Copernicus, it condensed into the search for simplicity and clarity), even if in the self-understanding of the individual researcher, Platonism as worldview retained the upper hand. Incidentally, the feeling of a new beginning in science began to spread precisely in Copernicus's time, and is evident in the increasing frequency of the adjective *novus* in book titles—see Thorndike, *Newness and Craving for Novelty*, 584 f. Because Burtt does not distinguish between worldview as a structure of thought and worldview as content, he makes his position vulnerable. For example, Strong has rightly worked out the fundamental character difference between Platonic metaphysics and the new understanding of mathematics (*Procedures and Metaphysics*, 4 ff., 15 ff., 185 ff.). But Strong is mistaken in assuming that the incompatibility between mathematics in the new sense and metaphysics in Burtt's sense justifies discarding metaphysics altogether; in doing so, he implicitly adopts Burtt's undifferentiated notion of it. In other words, Strong does not ask what the worldview preconditions of the new mathematical application or conception are: we are in fact speaking of the conviction that nature is structured according to logical laws.

value and a weapon against the syllogistic demonstrations of scholasticism. In Galileo and Descartes, this key feature of modern rationalism will emerge with full clarity.

The programmatic union of mathematics and physics, as previously shown, was both the result and the support of the *weltanschaulich*-ontological rehabilitation of nature and sense-perception. We now want to examine certain aspects of this complex of thought more closely, in order perhaps to find an explanation for that paradox wherein the *weltanschaulich*-ontological elevation of the empirical in mathematical natural science—unlike in other strands of modern rationalism—did not lead to a pure empiricism or even a sensualism in epistemology. This development becomes more understandable when we consider the *polemical function* of the alliance between mathematics and empiricism, which initially masked its internal tensions or even contradictions. Leonardo's example is instructive here. Reason (= mathematics) and experience are equally indispensable to him in his battle against (scholastic) authority. Experience, not authority, is the "*maestra vera*" he writes;[290] and elsewhere he attacks the same authority from the standpoint of reason: whoever appeals to authority in a dispute is using memory rather than intellect.[291] Reason and experience, then, act together in an emancipatory sense and intention; both fulfill the modern demand for vitality and immediacy. Even more: in both, immediacy transforms into a compelling *certezza*—a certainty meant to put an end to the sterile squabbling over supersensible matters.[292] The deeper meaning of Leonardo's remark, however, is that the collaboration of experience and reason within the new mode of thinking implies or presupposes the exclusion of that which, for the opponent, constituted the highest and most worthy object of knowledge. For reason and experience to align against this common adversary, they must—at least on some crucial points—be mutually dependent. The first aspect of this alliance (the second is discussed in the next paragraph) is that only experience is recognized as the scientifically legitimate object of reason, and that reason can only be "truly rational" if it does not lose itself in things

290 *Tagebuch*, 12, 14.

291 *Loc. cit.*, 14.

292 *Loc. cit.*, 34 ("somma certezza delle matematiche"), 26 ("esperienza, madre di ogni certezza")

that "*non si posson dimostrare per nessun essemplo naturale*"[293] ("cannot be demonstrated by any natural example"). Thus, the praise of experience is essentially a constant reminder to reason of its proper domain—and, conversely, whoever seeks in experience something that is not there, cannot proceed rationally either.[294]

The postulate that "true" reason should remain with experience as its only legitimate object is now reinforced by the thesis that all knowledge begins with sensory experience or sensation.[295] Although this thesis seems to be purely epistemological, it still carries within it the polemical-emancipatory intention previously encountered in the demand for vitality and immediacy. Leonardo's invocation of the *"certezza di ciascuna cosa che passa per li sensi"* ("the certainty of everything that passes through the senses") explicitly serves to expose problems like *"l'assenzia di Dio e dell'anima e simili"* ("the absence of God and of the soul and similar matters") as pseudo-problems.[296] However, Leonardo also knows a broader, richer concept of experience, which encompasses not only naïve, everyday sensory data but at least potentially the entire organized complex of cognition, within which not the senses but "truly rational" reason (in the previously defined sense) becomes authoritative. When he says that the purely theoretical sciences (clearly meaning syllogistic logic) contain no truth because they lack experience, he emphasizes in the same breath that no investigation can be called true science unless it proceeds via mathematical proof, and that certainty is only to be found where mathematics is applied or invoked.[297] What begins as sensualism ends in a profession of faith in reason. The alliance of reason and (sensory) experience, formed in combat against a common enemy, now becomes unstable and ambiguous once the relation between the two allies themselves is in question. For where are the binding criteria to decide, in each concrete case, where sensory experience ceases to be helpful and must yield priority to mathematics? More: is experience always reliable and usable—or can mathematical reasoning suffice on its own? Leonardo assures us that

293 *Loc. cit.*, 36.
294 *Loc. cit.*, 28.
295 *Loc. cit.*, 26.
296 Ibid
297 *Loc. cit.*, 30.

correct understanding is possible even without experience (in the narrow sense), if only the causes are known and their effects mentally deduced. The context of this statement is quite revealing of the *weltanschaulich* conditions underlying this intellectualist turn. He writes: *"Nessun effetto è in natura senza ragione; intendi la ragione e non ti bisogna esperienza.*[298]*"* ("There is no effect in nature without a cause; understand the cause, and you have no need of experience.") This trust in the intellect rests on faith in the logical structure of nature—or: epistemological devaluation of empiricism is paired with ontological elevation of nature. (Just as in the theological worldview—whether Platonic or Aristotelian—the sensory experience was meaningless when it came to that which was considered the essence of the highest logic of Being, namely God. What distinguishes the new attitude from the old is simply a new definition of what counts as ontologically supreme.) Because nature never violates her own laws, prefers the simplest path, and is ruled by necessity,[299] intellect and experience must, when properly functioning, converge. What matters is the *correct* interpretation of sensory data—data which in themselves cannot err; only our judgments do.[300] Thus the main concern of the scientist is not with sense experience *per se*, but with its interpretation: the activity of reason, even the subjugation of sense data to the postulates of logic and natural necessity. Earlier we saw the alliance of reason and experience as one in which experience claimed exclusivity as reason's domain, thus asserting its right to guide reason's orientation. The second aspect of the same alliance now reveals the dominance of reason: experience must be interpreted in light of logic and the necessity immanent in nature. Yet, despite this, there's no sense that empiricism is betrayed—even if reason must diverge from sensory impressions and evaluate them differently than the senses themselves do. A key indicator of reason's own proximity to empiricism, even while reinterpreting sense data, is for Leonardo the practical application of rational insight—namely: *techne*, technique, or technology. In this, the two aforementioned aspects of the bond between reason and experience are vividly unified.[301]

298 *Loc. cit.*, 32. See also the remarks by Luporini, *La Mente di Leonardo*, 25 f.

299 *Loc. cit.*, 32.

300 Ibid.

301 *Loc. cit.*, 40. It is claimed simultaneously that science leads practice ("la

The remarkable similarity between Leonardo's and Galileo's views on the relationship between reason and experience—despite the fact that the former was not a scientist in the modern sense while the latter perhaps epitomizes the scientist par excellence—confirms the thesis that even seemingly purely epistemological positions rest on a *weltanschaulich* (worldview-driven) foundation. That is, the decision regarding them had already been made within a broader worldview commitment and merely needed to be deduced and articulated. From this perspective, the debate over Leonardo's contribution to modern science becomes a shadow-boxing match. For our problem, it is irrelevant whether Leonardo made a contribution in the strict, scientistic-positivist sense.[302] On the contrary: the (correct) observation that he contributed little in this narrow sense only brings the *weltanschaulich* background of his views—and his theoretical concordance with Galileo (which no one denies, and which some have emphasized)—into sharper relief.[303] This agreement does not concern merely shared conclusions on various questions, but rather the very structure of thought, grounded in the same axiomatic assumptions. Galileo, too, prominently frames reason and experience as allied against the authority on which his opponents rely. Against this authority, he asserts not only the autonomy of reason but also the claim that its proper object is *il mondo sensibile*[304] (the sensible world). But experience (*esperienze sensate*) and *dimostrazioni necessarie* (necessary demonstrations) are also deployed, in a stricter epistemological sense, against traditional authority.[305] Yet the

scienza è il capitano e la pratica sono i soldati") and that mathematical science is rooted in mechanics ("la mecanicca è il paradiso delle scienze matematiche, perché con quella si viene al frutto matematico").

302 This is strongly denied by Randall, *The Place of Leonardo*, 192 f.; previously also by Olschki, *Literatur der Technik*, 410 ff. In contrast, Luporini (*La Mente di Leonardo*, ch. 1) expands Ruggiero's argument against Olschki's view (*La Cultura Scientifica del Rinascimento*, in *La Critica* XXVI, 1928). Overall, Jaspers's balanced judgment is probably most convincing (*Leonardo als Philosoph*, 20 ff.).

303 Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 318 ff.; Mondolfo, *Figure e idee*, 3 ff.

304 *Dialogo* II = *Opere* VII, 139: "venite pure con le ragioni e con le dimostrazioni ... non con testi e nude autorità, perché i discorsi nostri hanno a essere intorno al mondo sensibile."

305 See the letter to the Grand Duchess of Tuscany from 1615 = *Opere* V, 341 f.; cf. *Macchie Solari* II = *Opere* V, 139 and *Saggi* 48 = *Opere* VI, 339, 341.

possibility of lapsing into pure sensualism is excluded by the application of mathematics to physics—something which, as we've seen, for both Galileo and Leonardo is grounded in belief in the logical structure and necessity inherent in nature. This belief, in turn, provides the basis for their intellectualist turn. In Galileo's case, this turn takes on a much more radical form than in Leonardo's, due to reasons yet to be explored. But this only shows the internal tendency of systematically developed natural science. In both figures, belief in the inner logic or truth of nature (tellingly, Galileo at times uses *natura* and *vero* side by side, almost synonymously)[306] leads to the conviction that *sensate osservazioni* (empirical observations) can be replaced by *discorso*[307] (rational discourse)—that is, correct understanding of causes is sufficient to predict effects, without any empirical observation.[308] Correct reasoning, in fact, can sometimes surpass experimentation, since the latter is exposed to contingencies and interfering factors that can distort or obstruct its course.[309] Because an effect follows necessarily from its cause, its occurrence can be asserted even without empirical verification.[310] The thought experiment thus replaces real-world testing. Moreover, the scientifically indispensable hypothetical method itself only becomes possible through belief in the necessity and logic of nature. For the internal rationality of a hypothesis is both the precondition for its formulation and a preemptive affirmation of its validity in the face of nature's presumed rational behavior. So much so, that even empirical falsification does not necessarily undermine the theoretical validity of a demonstration built upon such a hypothesis.[311] To distrust nature would entail a narrow empiricism—an endless halting at induction. But pure induction is not only unreachable (since it's practically impossible to exhaust all individual cases), it is also useless.[312]

It must not be assumed, however, that Galileo thereby succumbed to an extreme intellectualism. Not only the polemical

306 *Discorsi e Dimostrazioni* I = *Opere* VIII, 131.
307 *Loc. cit.*, 105.
308 *Discorsi e Dimostrazioni* IV = *Opere* VIII, 296.
309 Letter to Ingoli (1624) = *Opere* VI, 545 f.
310 *Dialogo* II = *Opere* VII, 171.
311 Letter to Carcavy, June 5, 1637 = *Opere* XVII, 90 f.
312 *Considerazioni appartenenti al libro del Sig. Vincenzio* = *Opere* IV, 701.

intent behind his appeals to experience, not only his acute sense of the relationship between *techne* and science,[313] but above all his belief in the inner—though often hidden—logic and thus reliability of the empirical world prevented this.[314] As for Leonardo before him, though to a much lesser degree, what mattered most was the *correct* interpretation of sensory experience. For by itself, experience can merely indicate *that* something is, but not *how* or *why* it is.[315] Since the senses often deceive, they must be corrected by reason, which, by mathematically explaining the cause or sequence of a phenomenon, also uncovers the reasons for the senses' error.[316] This interpretation of sensory experience is known to have developed into the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. If the qualities perceived by the sense organs exist only in us, then the only things remaining as "real" are forms, numbers, and motions:[317] the book of nature is written in geometric figures.[318] Of course, this devaluation of the senses raised enormous epistemological problems, such that it must be counted as one of the primary sources of modern epistemology—the other being the question of the limits of human knowledge, which followed necessarily from the polemical rejection of the old concept of substance and the claim that substance itself is knowable. Only by accepting these difficulties could the world—or matter—be reshaped in such a way that mathematics became applicable to physics. *Ubi*

313 Olschki, *Galilei*, 148 ff.

314 This connection seems to be overlooked by Koyré when he somewhat one-sidedly emphasizes Galilean intellectualism (*Études Galiléennes* III, 126, 128). Contrast this with the insightful remarks by Clavelin, *La philosophie naturelle de Galilée*, 428 ff., 434 f.

315 Letter to Liceti, June 23, 1640 = *Opere* XVIII, 208.

316 Letter to Leopoldo (1640) = *Opere* VIII, 511; *Dialogo* II = *Opere* VII, 280 ff.; *De phaenomenis in orbe lunae* = *Opere* III, 393 ff

317 *Saggi* 48 = *Opere* VI, 350, 347.

318 *Saggi* 7 = *Opere* VI, 232; elsewhere (letter to Liceti, January 1641 = *Opere* XVIII, 295), Galileo writes that the book of philosophy (in this case, not the book of nature) is written in geometric figures—which nevertheless implies that, for him, cognition and world are structurally aligned. How Galileo's distinction between primary and secondary qualities revitalized fundamental insights from ancient atomism is described by Löwenheim, *Der Einfluß Demokrits*, esp. 253 ff.

materia, ibi geometria, Kepler had already proclaimed,[319] announcing the transformation of matter from quality into quantity—that is, into the homogeneous and measurable.[320] And so, ironically but logically, defenders of the traditional worldview could appear as the defenders of the qualitative-concrete, using the language of immediacy and vitality to support their position. It is deeply ironic that the rehabilitation of *sensibility* within natural science could not be achieved by appealing to immediate experience. Sensibility was deemed a worthy object of knowledge in the anti-Scholastic struggle only insofar as it could be mathematically grasped. Yet the mathematical analysis revealed its full power only in the description of *pure relations*, which as such are never directly given in experience. Thus, *sensibility* as an object of knowledge must exhibit logically intelligible structure—without this assumption, natural science is impossible. Hence, science needed to combat the Scholastic thesis that only the *unum, verum, bonum* (the one, true, and good) could be grasped with absolute logical clarity. At the same time, *sensibility* as a cognitive faculty appeared misleading and had to be bracketed—paradoxically, in the name of the very worldview that affirmed the rational structure of the world, and thus, ultimately, also that of sensibility itself. In other words, for the scientific rehabilitation of sensibility, the claim that empirical reality is the *worthy and exclusive* object of knowledge suffices; an epistemological empiricism (in the strict sense) is not essential to this, as it is in other branches of early modern rationalism. Thus, the shift toward a mathematical intellectualism in the natural sciences could proceed with a clear conscience—not as a betrayal of empirical knowledge or a return to the opponent's syllogistic-deductive method (as would sometimes be claimed in 18th-century polemics against Cartesianism). For the fundamental disagreement with the opponent concerned the definition of what constituted the highest and most secure object of knowledge; the dispute over method was merely an inevitable consequence of this deeper worldview conflict. As long as that conflict remained alive, no sense of betrayal toward empirical

319 Cited by Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 351 note 2. The mathematical intention also led Kepler to replace the soul with force, even though the immediate gain in content was limited—Dijksterhuis, *Mechanisierung*, 347.
320 See the elegant account by Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 387 f.; cf. Maier, *Metaphysische Hintergründe*, 340 f.

knowledge could arise: since the *despisers* of empirical knowledge were, by definition, the enemy, any attack against them—*even if conducted intellectually*—was, by the same token, a defense of empiricism.

Why Galileo pursued the path of mathematics with such consistency becomes clearer when one considers the intensity and implacability of his polemic, which aimed not at revising the old cosmology but at destroying it wholesale and replacing it with a new totality. Everyday experience, after all, did not refute the Aristotelian worldview—and no observation could, so long as the underlying *attitude* or *fundamental stance* remained intact.[321] It's no surprise then that the initial attacks on Aristotelianism took the form of theoretical criticisms, which weren't grounded in empirical facts. The critique of facts was its own matter, and only much later was a principled link drawn between these two kinds of critique.[322] Tycho Brahe, the first to systematically collect astronomical data, remained a Copernicus skeptic and tried to save geocentrism with his own hybrid system.[323] Kepler, who inherited Brahe's data, rejected Brahe's conclusions. The dead-end of empiricism becomes most visible where it appears most radical—Telesio is the example—because his stance was not so much epistemological as worldview-based: a rebellion against authority and its metaphysics.[324] Telesio, despite being a radical empiricist, placed mathematics *beneath* physics,[325] and still clung to the Aristotelian geocentric cosmos. Even opponents of mathematics like Bruno[326] had to admit that sensory data could not disprove the old cosmology, nor demonstrate Earth's motion around the sun.[327] Tellingly, *Galileo himself criticizes the unreliability of the senses precisely in the context of defending*

321 Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, 4 f.; on the relationship between perspective and data selection or interpretation, see Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 161 ff.

322 Hall, *The Scientific Revolution*, XV.

323 On Brahe and his geocentric system, see Dreyer, *History of Astronomy*, 359 ff.; Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*, 200 ff.

324 On this aspect of Telesio's empiricism, see Gentile, *Telesio*, 64 f.

325 *Rer. nat.* VIII, 5 (= III, 99 f.).

326 *Cena*, V = *Opere* I, 112 f.: "Altro è giocare con la geometria, altro è verificare con la natura."

327 *De l'infinito* I = *Opere* I, 288 f.; *De immenso* I, 4 and II, 8 (= *OL* I, 214 and 285).

the Copernican system.[328] His consistent turn to mathematics stems from the conviction that a new cosmological totality cannot emerge from empirical data alone. And this concern for *unity* permeates his entire thought. It even overrides his concern for rigorous proofs in the details. When needed, he simply brushed aside difficulties to preserve the unity of his central idea. Newton would later provide the actual foundations for classical mechanics, but it was Galileo who first presented the new worldview as a comprehensive and convincing alternative to the Aristotelian-Scholastic model.[329] In short, Galileo's thought is *profoundly polemical*. He understood his positions as *counter*-positions and embraced stark oppositions. The title of his major work, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, forces a binary decision—*Tertium non datur*. Even the dialogue form is not some nod to Platonic humanism but a rhetorical weapon, highlighting the polemical thrust and existential intensity of his project. He wasn't tinkering with partial improvements or textual philology. He wanted a *nuova filosofia*, a *new philosophy* as a whole. His goal was nothing less than to "*rifar i cervelli degli uomini*.[330]" And he knew exactly who stood in his way: his deliberate use of the word *avversario*[331] ("adversary") leaves no doubt.

Mathematical natural science abolished the previously dominant ontological and epistemological dualism. The quantification—i.e., the mathematization—of the empirical realm raised its epistemic status to the level of absolute certainty, a level previously reserved only for the higher, intelligible realm. Implicitly, this redefined the empirical as *true being*, that is, as being governed by necessity.[332] This produced a unification of the worldview via the *leveling* of former hierarchies based on the contrast between the intelligible and the sensible—a shift first made visible in the abolition of the upper, celestial sphere of the Greco-Christian cosmos. Galileo's revolutionary contribution lay above all in the connection he forged between astronomy and mathematical physics. He grounded the heliocentric system in a *physical* framework,

328 *Dialogo* II = *Opere* VII, 280 ff.
329 Gillispie, *The Edge of Objectivity*, 50.
330 *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 82.
331 Especially typical of this polemical stance is the thematically important passage in the letter to the Grand Duchess from 1615 = *Opere* V, 341 f.
332 Boutroux, *De l'idée de la loi naturelle*, 135 f.

thereby integrating it into a unified worldview—something the meager (if fecund) arguments of Copernicus or Kepler's lingering cosmic mysticism had failed to accomplish.[333] By claiming that the same physical laws apply both on Earth and in the heavens, Galileo shattered the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic division of the universe into two fundamentally different regions.[334] He thus took the decisive step toward a conception of the world as a *single whole*, regulated by uniform laws. W. Heisenberg's pointed comment, directed at Newton, perhaps best captures the significance of this shift: "We can hardly imagine today what an extraordinary experience it must have been for the scientists of that time to realize that the motions of the stars and the motions of bodies on Earth could be explained by the same simple system of laws. Whoever has not felt some trace of the wonder of this insight can never hope to understand the spirit of modern science.[335]"

Also the new theory of motion was founded on the *weltanschauliche* (worldview-driven) revaluation of nature and contributed essentially to the unification of the worldview. Since, according to Aristotle's own view, the explanation of motion constitutes the *alpha and omega* of natural explanation altogether,[336] the implications of the rehabilitation of nature had to emerge primarily in the new theory of motion, if the core of the opposing view was to be mortally struck. Ontological dualism and the metaphysically grounded superiority of rest over motion were closely linked in Aristotle. The polemical reversal of both elements of his position results—at least in the long run—in a dissolution of that dualism, as the unmoved mover is initially put out of service and then eliminated, and motion is granted primacy as the principle of life in nature, over rest, which in transcendence had previously been the ultimate pinnacle. The victory of motion over rest thus signifies the victory of rehabilitated nature over old transcendence. In Aristotle, however, rest was not only the prerequisite for motion (in both senses: the unmoved mover[337] and the resting point through which and relative to which motion takes place

333 Koyré, *Metaphysics and Measurement*, 8, 11.
334 *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 62 ff.
335 Heisenberg, *Wandlungen in den Grundlagen*, 32.
336 *Phys.* 200b12–15.
337 *Phys.* 256ab.

and is recognized as such),[338] but also its natural—if perhaps provisional—end.[339] In the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition, the metaphysically grounded superiority of rest was reflected in the view that, within a nature that is as a whole always in motion, bodies nonetheless strive to regain rest in their respective *locus naturalis*.[340] The polemical reversal of this view gives rise to the new thesis that not rest, but motion itself could be the natural state—or as Galileo says, the "natural inclination" of a body.[341] The reinterpretation of the principle of inertia confirms and seals this dramatic shift. Whereas the Aristotelian-scholastic principle of inertia assumes that a body tends to remain at rest if it is already at rest, and seeks rest if it is in motion, the modern principle states that a body in uniform motion does *not* strive toward rest, but rather strives to *remain* in motion.[342] Here something radically new is implied—something that had to break even the most flexible bounds of the traditional worldview. A comparison between the modern principle of inertia and the *impetus* theory (the boldest move within the scholastic framework) can demonstrate this. Attempts to derive the former directly from the latter overlook not only the formal-structural differences between them, but also the vast change in worldview that lies between them. In contrast to the self-preservation of motion in the modern principle, the *impetus* theory assumes the necessity of a *movens* both for the initiation *and* for the preservation of motion. What the scholastics of the 14th century diverged from in Aristotle was their willingness to assume an *inner movens* where no

338 Düring, *Aristoteles*, 337 f.

339 Although motion in nature as a whole is eternal, each individual motion has a beginning and end (Solmsen, *Aristotle's System*, 224). Only circular motion can be eternal (*Phys.* 241b18–20), and it is, moreover, the first motion altogether (*Phys.* 260b15 ff. and 261b27 ff.). The rule in nature, however, is the alternation of motion and rest (*Phys.* 254ab). How Aristotle's doctrines of the eternity of motion and the unmoved mover can be reconciled is discussed by Wieland (*Die Ewigkeit der Welt*, 299 f.).

340 Maier, *Metaphysische Hintergründe*, 369 f.

341 *Macchie Solari* II = *Opere* V, 134. There it states that this motion arises "per intrinseco principio e senza bisogno di particolar motore esterno."

342 According to a formulation by Maier, *An der Grenze von Scholastik*, 185. Significantly, Kepler—who introduced the term *inertia*—retained its older meaning (Crombie, *Augustine to Galileo* II, 202), so that Newton could no longer understand it (Koyré, *Newton Studies*, 70 note 1).

external force could explain a specific movement. But the *impetus* remains the cause of motion—which must cease when it ceases (Buridan's thesis of the permanence of *impetus* does not abolish this causal relation)—whereas, according to the modern principle of inertia, motion is, as it were, self-perpetuating.[343] This difference regarding the (permanent) necessity of a *movens* reflects the differing general evaluations of nature's autonomy or autarky. On the basis of the *impetus* theory alone, it was therefore impossible in the 14th century to arrive at the decisive thesis that motion—and not rest—could be the natural state of a body. Rest had not yet lost its ontological status, because the throne of the unmoved mover still stood unshaken. It is noteworthy that even within the more or less monistically oriented currents of the transitional period, the primacy of rest remained largely unchallenged, at least in theory—[344]precisely because of its traditional close association with the idea of God's sovereign immutability. And just as within these half-measures unmistakable tendencies toward a revaluation of nature were present—and no matter how they contributed to the formation of that *weltanschauliche* orientation which was indispensable to the new natural science—so too did the *impetus* theory already contain elements that could be taken as valuable stimuli and further developed, especially after the original scholastic framework in which it emerged and to which it was logically bound had dissolved, whether naturally or, in the absence of an alternative, unavoidably. The fundamental logical-structural difference between the *impetus* theory and the modern principle of inertia is no obstacle to the general impact of the former in favor of the latter—and this for the simple reason that the *history of effects* (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of an idea is not necessarily—if at all—determined by strictly "rational" factors.

343 Maier, *Vorläufer Galileis*, 64 ff., 132 ff., 142 f.; *Zwei Grundprobleme*, 306. Maier's theses refute Duhem's linear conception (*Système du Monde* VIII, 200 ff.).

344 Not only for Ficino (Kristeller, *Die Philosophie des M. F.*, 160), but also for Cusanus, rest is more perfect—or the precondition of motion (on motion as *explicatio* of rest, see *Doct. Ign.* II, 10 = *Werke* I, 60). Intellectually significant is Cusanus's merging of *impetus* and *spiritus*, whereby—drawing on the Platonic association of soul and motion (*Phaedrus* 245c)—he overcomes the limits of Aristotelian motion theory in a panpsychist direction (cf. Gandillac, *Nikolaus von Cues*, 77 f.). Likewise, in Leonardo, the autonomy of motion is ultimately achieved through the detour of panpsychism (Luporini, *La Mente di L.*, 67 f.).

Misinterpretations of an older idea often prove historically necessary, tactically expedient—and even successful.[345]

The contribution of the new theory of motion to the unification of the worldview becomes easily understandable when we consider the connection between the old worldview and the Aristotelian dualistic cosmos. Since, according to Aristotelian premises, the movement of heavy bodies toward the earth could only be explained by assuming that the center of the Earth was also the center of the universe,[346] Aristotelian physics was logically linked to geocentrism and, at the same time, to the notion of a finite universe—since an infinite one could evidently have no center. Furthermore, the finite universe had to be a plenum, as a vacuum would have made motion impossible, given that, for Aristotle, motion could occur only through contact.[347] In contrast, the new theory of motion—which, as mentioned, leads to the thesis of the self-perpetuation of motion—grounds an entirely different cosmology: that of an infinite universe,[348] in which there is neither a center nor any longer a division between a

345 This is partly overlooked by Maier, since she—albeit with great success—focuses on the formal-structural difference between the theory of *impetus* and the principle of inertia. And yet she herself notes the repeated use of the *impetus* theory in the 16th century (Telesio, Bruno, and also Galileo) against Aristotelianism, even though the scholastics had laid claim to it (*Zwei Grundprobleme*, 304 f.). This is a sure sign of its potential functional value, even if—as Maier rightly emphasizes—not of its logical structure. Also characteristic is Galileo's blending of old and new conceptions of *impetus* (*Zwei Grundprobleme*, 310; cf. Clavelin, *La philosophie naturelle de Galilée*, 259 f.), as well as Thomas's rejection of the *impetus* theory (*Zwei Grundprobleme*, 138 ff.). Dijksterhuis is therefore right to distinguish between the logical and historically effective aspects of the question (*Mechanisierung*, 205 f.).

346 *De Caelo*, 296b8 ff.

347 *Phys.*, 213a12 ff.

348 Koyré famously characterized the core of the scientific revolution of the 16th–17th centuries as the shift "from the closed world to the infinite universe." He also alludes to the philosophical–worldview background of this shift (*Von der geschlossenen Welt*, 8, 12), though unfortunately without exploring it in detail. Particularly interesting—due to its explicitly metaphysical motivations—is Kepler's rejection of the infinity of the world (63 ff.) as well as Galileo's wavering position on the matter (esp. 94 f.). Koyré is right to insist on the role of Bruno in this process (46 ff.), which confirms our thesis about the intellectual-historical impact of Renaissance natural philosophy.

changeable sublunar and an unchanging celestial sphere—[349]a division that was itself most closely tied to the concept of a finite world, to the theory of motion that underpinned it, and thus to the unmoved mover. The fate of the latter is particularly relevant to our question, as its fall marks the beginning of the end of pure spirit (*νοῦς νοήσεως)* under the blows of rehabilitated nature and sensuality. It is initially clear that its sphere of action is at least curtailed by the principle of inertia, in that its moving effect need not persist—as it had to according to Aristotelian assumptions—but may be limited to a single, initial impulse. The meaning and function of the first mover thus change drastically. But this loosening of the connection between God and motion considerably weakens its teleological character. As Aristotle himself states, his theory of motion was conceived in no small part as a defense against materialism,[350] which found expression, among other things, in the connection between motion and *entelechy* or purposiveness.[351] Whereas Aristotelian motion had a beginning and an end, the new motion is as purposeless as it is unceasing—it is purposeless precisely because it is unceasing: unceasing and all-encompassing. The logical endpoint of this development is already prefigured by a younger contemporary of Galileo, who did not shy away from its ultimate consequences: Hobbes.[352] For him, rest as the opposite of motion no longer really exists; rest and motion are only opposite *names*, for in reality, what opposes motion is not rest, but merely other motion.[353] It follows that rest can only be caused by resistance, which must itself be motion.[354] Thus motion now generates rest—not the reverse. *A fortiori*, motion can only be brought about by motion;[355] the first mover, therefore, can no longer be unmoved, and thus necessarily loses its former dignity. For even if one were to

349 *De Caelo*, 279b4 ff.

350 *Metaph.* 998b22 ff.

351 *Phys.* 200b25 ff.; 224b–225a.

352 "Galilaeus primus aperuit nobis physicae universae portam primam, naturam motus" (*De Corp.*, Ep. Ded. = *OL* I [no page number]).

353 *De Corp.* II, 9 § 7 = *OL* I, 111.

354 So Tönnies, *Hobbes*, 141. A good overview of Hobbes's theory of motion and its central importance for his entire thought is given by Spragens in Chapter 2 ("Inertia and the End of the Finite Cosmos") of his book *The Politics of Motion*, 52 ff.

355 *De Corp.* II, 9 § 7 = *OL* I, 110.

suppose that God were in fact the first mover (though Hobbes makes little effort to prove this), he would have to be in motion and thus a body like any other. In conjunction with his view that only bodies can exist as parts of the universe, Hobbes reaches the conclusion that God is either a part of the universe or identical with the universe itself.[356] In the latter case, he is in practice already eliminated; but even the former entails serious implications that Hobbes—though he omits them for understandable caution—must have seen. For if God is necessarily only a part of the universe, he could not have existed before it, nor could he have created it: a part cannot exist before the whole of which it is a part.

Only through the triumph of the mathematical method and the resulting unification of the worldview did the new, nature- and sensuality-rehabilitating weltanschauung present itself as a well-founded and coherent system of thought, capable of standing in competition with the dominant one. A weltanschauung cannot prevail in the long run if it is only poorly rationalized—especially when its opponent can entrench itself behind such a solid theoretical bulwark as, for example, Thomism. It must be able to convince polemically, which does not always or necessarily depend on its truth content or the soundness of its internal critique of the opponent's position: it is enough if it appears as a comprehensive and self-contained alternative.[357] The search for truth takes place within the framework of

356 *Answer to Bramhall* = *EW* IV, 349.

357 In other words, a promising alternative must be a paradigm—or at least clearly imply one. Kuhn's historical research on science has confirmed this view of paradigms. A central point of his analysis is the thesis "that the act of judgment which leads scientists to reject a previously accepted theory is never based only on a comparison of that theory with nature. The decision to reject one paradigm is always also the decision to accept another, and the judgment that leads to that decision involves the comparison of both paradigms with nature and with each other" (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 110 f.). Kuhn's observations on the structural similarity between political and scientific conflict are also very interesting (128 ff.).
Now, Kuhn tends to reduce the change of the scientific paradigm in early modernity to intellectual-historical factors—or at least focuses exclusively on them—and in this respect, objections to his position are not entirely unjustified (such objections have recently been raised by Wolff, *Geschichte der Impetustheorie*, 48 ff., who in turn reactivates older Marxist approaches; see

struggle against an opponent, and since the opponent stands in the way of "truth," the latter becomes necessarily polemical; for this reason, it must also present itself in the form of a systematic theoretical alternative, which far exceeds the bounds of securely established knowledge: otherwise, it would lack comprehensiveness—this invaluable weapon. This view could be confirmed, at least *ex contrario*, by the reception history of the Copernican thesis. Its formulation did not bring about an upheaval and remained largely unnoticed even in

especially Zilsel, *Die sozialen Ursprünge*, 49 ff., 88 ff., and the somewhat more nuanced position of Bernal, *Science in History*, 253 ff.). Useful, if viewed as a third party, remains the debate between Borkenau, *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild*, esp. 1 ff., and Grossmann, *Die gesellschaftlichen Grundlagen*, esp. 190 ff., 210 ff.).

Against a strictly orthodox Marxist interpretation, however, it must be asserted that the undeniable broad link between paradigm shift and technology-oriented practice in the 17th century should not be interpreted according to the reflection theory. As Wolff himself notes (58), the initiators of the paradigm shift—despite Galileo (see above, note 250)—were not always familiar with, or interested in, developments in the field of technology. The process is therefore considerably more complex. Within the ferment set off by social changes on multiple levels, the need for a new total orientation or paradigm is felt by various heterogeneous groups and individuals, so that the formulation and satisfaction of this need may be undertaken not (only) by those directly affected in central domains, but also, for example, by scholars with heterogeneous motivations.

As certain as it is that such motivations cannot *cause* the social ferment, it can nevertheless be shown that the logical-conceptual structure of the new paradigm (which, incidentally, is tacitly presupposed even in purely sociological or Marxist analyses and invisibly guides them) cannot be determined simply by studying the thought-world of those subjects who directly carried the change in a supposedly central field. Rather, it becomes accessible only through engagement with intellectually significant figures. Bruno (I deliberately use this extreme example of someone utterly alien to technology and mathematics) "signifies" more for the physiognomy of the transitional age than the perhaps piously Catholic mindset of a craftsman familiar with the latest machines in the late 16th century. One should therefore avoid both the hermeneutically sterile reflection theory and the misleading one-sidedness of many intellectually focused researchers. The conceptual articulation of a worldview orientation beyond the constraints of the reflection model has—hopefully as this analysis shows—its advantages also for understanding sociological factors, namely by revealing the polemical

scholarly circles until the early 17th century. The heliocentric thesis implied many novelties, both methodological and physical, but these were scarcely—if at all—consistently developed by Copernicus. This thesis, then, was not an obvious threat to the balanced and comprehensive scholastic worldview, which may explain why it was initially received with a degree of goodwill in certain Catholic circles.[358] Before the heliocentric thesis could become a stumbling block, it had to appear as a component—perhaps also the most spectacular one—of a cosmological worldview that challenged the dominant one on all fronts, quite apart from the fact that, to be fully justified in itself, it actually required an entirely new cosmology.

Since the first decisive battle of the new worldview was fought and won in the field of natural science, the scientific model had to acquire general paradigmatic significance—and this in a double sense. Methodologically, the collaboration of experience and intellect stood out, whereby the primacy of the latter in the process of knowledge was in no way compromised by appeal to the former; at the same time, the new worldview—now seen as a structure—exerted an almost magical effect on the many friends of the new worldview who were not themselves scientists. A close connection was naturally established between these two meanings (the methodological and the structural) of the scientific paradigm. It was assumed that the harmonious structure

character of the emergent paradigm. Generalization proceeds from polemical intention, not from the increasingly abstract results of technology-oriented practice. Precisely because the polemical element—especially in logically consistent form—is decisive, scholars without technical experience were still able to formulate usable scientific paradigms. It is, I believe, the hold of the reflection theory that prevents Marxist-oriented scholars from fully appreciating the concrete role of the polemical.

In this context, the important book by Specht must also be mentioned, which excellently describes the nature of paradigmatic or system-conditioned subjective inner worlds—worlds that can differ radically in content from those of other subjects, despite fulfilling similar functions (*Innovation und Folgelast*, esp. 21 ff., 50 ff.). My only objection is that Specht limits himself to the correct, but almost tautological, observation that the diversity of philosophies can be explained by the diversity of subjective inner worlds and explanatory contexts (p. 25), without examining the causes of this double diversity. That is at least one reason why the role of the polemical is scarcely addressed directly in his work.

358 Stimson, *The Gradual Acceptance*, passim.

—considered a value—could only be attained through the application of the scientific method. This explains why Spinoza sought to justify the new biblical exegesis, which aimed at religious harmony, precisely by referring to the scientific method.[359] (This stance dominated the 18th century as well, although now the mature Newtonian model of nature served as the reference point)[360]. Characteristically, from early on the demand for the application of the axiomatic method—raised even by theologians—was directed explicitly against the scholastic *disputatio in utramque partem*, which was denounced as the source of fruitless dispute and thus of skepticism.[361] The methodology associated with the scientific model thus seemed to be the only one capable of ending the tendency toward skepticism that arose from the realization of the futility of battles waged in the name of absolute or religious truths. But even that form of skepticism which, in many eyes, was at least negatively linked to the former—namely, the denial of any absolute truth—was seemingly curable only through mathematical-axiomatic thinking. Already in the 16th century, this was deployed not only against the doctrines of moral relativism or private (libertinism) or political (Machiavellianism) immorality.[362] We will return to this in the discussion of natural law in the 17th century. For now, it must be emphasized that the mathematical-axiomatic methodology was considered particularly suitable for supporting normative claims at a time when, due to the emergence and spread of skeptical tendencies, the specter of nihilism hung over modern rationalism as such. In keeping with the polemical needs of this concrete situation, the image of the unified whole—gained through an intellectually oriented method, one that avoided the skeptical implications of extreme empiricism,[363] and structurally governed by a few simple laws—appeared not merely as a fact but also as a value, as a model worthy of

359 *Tractatus* VII (= *Opera* III, 98): "dico methodum interpretandi Scripturam haud differre a methodo interpretandi naturam."

360 See, for example, d'Alembert's remarks on the scientific treatment of historical-biblical material, *Éléments* III and V § VI = *Œuvres* II, 24 ff., 103 ff.

361 References in Schüling, *Axiomatische Methode*, 78 ff.

362 References in Schüling, *Axiomatische Methode*, 94 ff.

363 Proponents of epistemological empiricism were aware early on of its skeptical implications; see Cassirer's analysis of Campanella's epistemology, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 245. The problem of skepticism will play a central role in all future epistemological debates.

imitation, which should underlie all efforts at a human-worthy ordering of life. Here, the paths of science and morality intersect in the rationalization of the new worldview. Only as a systematically organized whole could the new natural science attain philosophical status—that is, become capable of being linked with normative statements in such a way that the value scale of the new worldview appeared as a necessary component of a valid world explanation, and thus as firmly grounded. The comprehensiveness of the value scale requires the comprehensiveness of the world explanation. The construction of a methodically derived, systematic, and effective whole was therefore the most important contribution that science made to the new worldview. (We omit here discussion of the importance of a general framework of orientation for scientific research in particular.)

The scientific model exploited its tactical-ideological advantages by effectively countering the suspicion of atheism. In a time when belief in morality and belief in God still largely coincided (since this identity is no longer self-evident to everyone today, we must make an unbiased logical and historical effort to grasp it if we want to understand the intellectual climate and struggles of the early modern period), the suspicion of nihilism could not be convincingly refuted without some form—however formulated—of theoretical assurance of belief in God. Precisely the cautious approach of the proponents of the scientific model (even Hobbes, as we saw, only dared to hint at certain implications), and thus its at least outwardly relatively conservative character in this regard, gave it tactical flexibility and chances of success in an age when atheism and nihilism suspicions were two sides of the same coin. It is doubtful whether a bluntly atheistic model of nature could have asserted itself so clearly, both intellectually and socially, under the prevailing conditions. Apart from the considerable internal shortcomings of the monistic currents within Renaissance natural philosophy, the dangerous kinship of atheism and pantheism especially stood in the way of their dissemination (the fate of Spinozism in the 18th century—[364] when ideas already circulated more freely—shows unmistakably how difficult pantheism must have had it in the 17th or even the 16th century). Although monistic currents prepared the way for the scientific model in many respects (rehabilitation of nature, the formulation of the idea of a unified whole,

364 See below, Chapter VI, Section 2.

etc.), the conception of nature as a machine differed fundamentally from pantheistic monism—in fact, it was fatal for the latter:[365] the image of the machine suggests the idea of a designer or prime mover. But not only this idea of the great mechanic or architect (depending on the metaphor used) helped the scientific model remain within the framework of theism and thus acceptable to broader segments of society. Christian commonplaces were also reinterpreted in ways that could benefit the new view of nature. In this way, not only was an open break with the Church largely avoided, but also a polemical advantage gained over it—namely, by appealing to some of its doctrines in support of theses the Church itself rejected (thereby implicitly denying the Church its monopoly on interpretation,[366] which could not go unpunished). One example of the reinterpretation of Christian commonplaces in the sense of the new view is when Galileo demands the practical replacement of theology by physics—or, the recognition of nature as the highest object of knowledge—under the pious pretext that the study of God's works should be given precedence over the study of His words, especially since direct knowledge of the divine will surpasses our intellectual capacity.[367] Similar formulations appear in Bacon.[368] The enthusiasm for God's visible works (which would later degenerate into physico-theology) thus becomes a religious justification for the new kind of natural inquiry. The same purpose is served by the idea of the perfect order of being, in which God's wisdom and omnipotence are said to be reflected. It is now claimed that this very order proves the mathematical structuring of the universe. "Posuit Deus omnia in numero, pondere et mensura" ("God has set all things in number, weight, and measure"), writes Galileo in a note.[369] This means: God is unquestionably the creator of the world—but as the new science sees

365 Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, 100.

366 Galileo explicitly challenges the Church's monopoly on interpretation—even while professing personal piety—when he claims that the *veri sensi* of Scripture, as he interprets them, are compatible with the Copernican theory (see the letter to Castelli, December 21, 1613 = *Opere* V, 282 f., 284 f.; cf. letter to Dini, March 23, 1615 = *Opere* V, 302 ff.).

367 Letter to Diodati, January 15, 1633 = *Opere* XV, 24 f.

368 *Interpretation of Nature*, I = *Works* III, 219 ff.; *Advancement of Learning* II = *Works* III, 478 ff.

369 *Opere* IV, 52.

the world. Creation by God thus becomes an argument for the validity of its positions. The examples of the reinterpretation of Christian commonplaces could be multiplied indefinitely. They are brilliant feats of casuistry, but they often also bear witness to a painful personal struggle to reconcile loyalties that had, in fact, already come apart[370].

To properly assess the appeal of the new model of nature, we must recall the age of the religious wars in all its concrete detail. It lasted more than a century (even significantly longer if one takes into account important aftereffects like the revocation of the Edict of Nantes) and painfully marked the life of all major European nations. Apart from the everyday purging activity of the organized Counter-Reformation, the cruelty and scale of mutual destruction during the wars and civil wars in France, the Netherlands, Germany, and England (insofar as the civil war there was a religious war) reached a level at which moral dismay—at least in certain circles—could not fail to occur.[371] The assumption readily suggested itself that in these wars, the true face of the old worldview had revealed itself; traditional

370 In light of these observations, the much-discussed question of the religious faith of the great founders of modern science must be reconsidered. The sincerity of this faith can hardly be doubted, but at the same time, its tonal shift must be acknowledged. It becomes a personal faith—that is, a belief reliant on one's own interpretation of religion—even if it claims or strives to align with church doctrine. It thus no longer opposes research but becomes its correlate; faith and inquiry become parallel forms of existential intensity and thereby share in the experiential content of early modern rationalism. This is the dimension of religious belief that, under the new circumstances, takes on a progressive role. But it would be wrong to assume that the entire personal *credo* of these individuals was historically relevant to their intellectual activity. There are elements in it that are historically irrelevant, despite their great subjective importance. The epoch-making insights ignite at the intersection of personal belief with the specific character of the new worldview orientation—no matter how disguised the latter might be. For even in disguise, it is capable of refunctioning heterogeneous ideas to serve its own purposes (from the Church's perspective, it was therefore right not to trust the sincere professions of faith from some scientists; it knew that the worm of a different thinking style had already grown too strong in them). This constellation often remains unconscious to the person involved, because what we call a worldview orientation only becomes fully graspable as an independent structure after its complete unfolding.

371 In general, see Leder, *Geschichte der Religionsfreiheit*, passim.

Church, authority, scholastic philosophy, religious fanaticism, and the like were all thrown into the same pot (the moral and polemical intent in many was too strong to allow time and inclination for finer conceptual distinctions), reduced to their supposed "essence" and regarded as the cause of the misery.[372] To the chaos of discord and destruction—now seen as the necessary consequence of the old worldview—the commanding harmony and unity of the new model of nature, with its simplicity, was almost automatically set in opposition; for in it, oppositions were reconciled by the operation of general laws accessible to reason, or rendered fruitful in terms of the whole. The new spirit was therefore also to serve the harmonization of opposites in the age of reason. (How strong and lasting the influence of this way of thinking—born of the experience of the religious wars—was, is evident in a thinker as significant as Leibniz; his efforts to bring churches together on the one hand, and to resolve all philosophical oppositions within a universal system on the other, stem from the same concern.)[373] Thus, from the structure of nature, a norm of human behavior is derived—from an *is*, an *ought*. This is made possible by the assumption that the said model of nature is a product of the new worldview, and therefore must express the essence of this worldview; if unity and harmony reign in the natural model, then the essence of the new spirit must also consist in unity and harmony; it is to this spirit, then, that the guidance of the world's fate should be entrusted. This line of thought is logically sound insofar as there is, in fact, a close connection between the nature of a way of thinking and the structure

372 Typical passages in Bacon, *Essays* III (*On the Unity of Religion*) in connection with Essay I (*Of Religion*) from the 1612 edition (= *Works* VI, 382 f., 543 f.); cf. Hobbes, *Behemoth* III (= *EW* VI, 343) in connection with *Leviathan* XLVI (= *EW* III, 664 ff.). The complaints against sterile and dangerous theological disputes were most impressively compiled and extended by Bayle in the period between the Wars of Religion and the Enlightenment (see Labrousse, *Bayle* II, 417 ff.; cf. 317 ff.). In the 18th century, they remained a commonplace of anti-clerical propaganda (typical passages in Voltaire: "les querelles des théologiens sont devenues des guerres de cannibales," *Essai sur les Moeurs* CXXVIII = *OC* XII, 284; cf. CLXXX and CXCVII = *OC* XIII, 62, 177; also in Rousseau, esp. the *Letter to Beaumont* = *OC* IV, 974 f.).

373 On Leibniz's ecumenism, see Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience européenne*, 262 ff., and Naert, *La pensée politique de Leibniz*, 74 ff.; more recently, the monograph by Eisenkopf, *Leibniz und die Einigung der Christenheit*, passim.

of its knowledge—or the structuring of its objects of knowledge. Nevertheless, the proponents of the new worldview did not want this position to be understood merely as an objective observation—which, moreover, could quite well be interpreted in terms of the relativity of worldviews. In their eyes, the said connection appeared as a correspondence between valuing reason and the objective structure of the world. The values to which reason assents therefore have objective validity, since they are meant to be a transposition of world-order onto human relations: unity and harmony under the sign of law and reason, which grasps the law and is therefore essentially akin to it. In this way, reason becomes as binding, in the spirit of the new worldview, as the law of the new science of nature. Reason as freedom and law as necessity are again not to be seen as opposites. For the concept of necessity here, like that of freedom, is polemically intended; both are directed against a common enemy, not against each other. Necessity here means that the enemy's concept of freedom is arbitrary, and therefore the source of anarchy and conflict, whereas one's own is the only true and possible freedom. Thus, the appeal to necessity is not meant to restrict one's own freedom, but rather to strip the opponent's notion of freedom of any objective foundation. This is a point of the highest importance if we are to understand the strange play involved in the glorification of law and necessity in the name of freedom. The deepest connection between these concepts is, in truth, not made on the basis of an ontological-objective, but on that of a polemical-subjective dialectic—no matter whether the latter presents itself as "objective" (which, in any case, serves only to enhance its polemical force). The attacker must establish this connection; this was evident not only in the 17th century, but also in the 19th, when the liberal-individualistic concept of freedom was attacked in the name of historical lawfulness.

3. The Primacy of Anthropology and Its Ambiguous

Conequences

a) Man as Master over Nature and the Scientific Model of Nature

In its organic connection with a specific conception of man's position and purpose in the world, the scientific model reveals its normative component at a neuralgic point. Indeed, the anthropological grounding—or supplementation—of the scientific model was unavoidable, since it rested on the worldview decision to rehabilitate nature: this rehabilitation necessarily had to be accompanied by an elevation of man's status, because in the traditional theological framework, conceptions of nature and of man were mutually conditioned. Old and new positions can, in their polemical opposition, be ideal-typically summarized as follows: the revaluation of nature turns it into the object of systematic, primary, or even exclusive concern. Yet only such engagement with nature allows for its mastery. Man (as a species) can attain the status of ruler only insofar as his efforts are directed toward nature. As long as he remains spiritually bound to God in one way or another, he must resign himself to the role of subject, since sovereignty over God is unthinkable. Within the theological position, the exclusion of nature as a primary sphere of activity—and thus precisely man's direct relation to God—condemned him to dependency (though the hope of salvation could make this dependency appear attractive and worthwhile—but sovereignty, in any case, had to be renounced here). The new option, therefore, had necessarily to be linked to a change in man's status (as a species) with regard to the main object of human interest. Socially, this change became visible, among other things, in the gradual weakening or dissolution of the Church's concrete rule—i.e., that institution which derived its claim to power from the self-assigned task of overseeing or guiding man's direct relation to God, while excluding nature as his primary field of activity.

This process unfolded not without a certain paradox. Precisely the effort to place nature at the center of human concern—given the unavoidable use of mathematical methodology to construct a unified and effective cosmological whole—had to lead to quantification, i.e.,

the mechanization and *disenchantment* of nature. Nature turned into a barren realm of blind necessity; it stood indifferent to human desires and hopes,[374] especially since it could no longer be influenced indirectly by appeasing God. The elimination of *causae finales*, which was indispensable to the mechanization of the worldview,[375] directly opposed the consoling belief that nature had been created by Providence for the sake of man and with regard to his needs. The new position thus seemed to logically imply that man, helpless before the merciless machinery of nature, had more to fear than to hope for. We can hardly understand why what was—seen from this angle—undeniably a loss could nevertheless be regarded as a gain, unless we grasp the polemical dimension of the argument. Since the theological opponent *by definition* embodied dependence or submission, and since the *causae finales* were a central part of his doctrine, their rejection had to be understood *ipso facto* as a contribution to human emancipation. The loss of the security once offered by the *causae finales* could also be more calmly accepted insofar as the new worldview had something at least equivalent—or equally promising and ultimately reassuring—to replace it: the promise that humans could become, in Descartes' words,[376] "comme maîtres et possesseurs de la nature"—namely through technology and industry.[377] The disenchantment of nature, which at first threatened to render man an orphan, reveals itself, from the standpoint of his future dominion, as an advantage. Mechanized nature operates according to simple laws, and simplicity is more easily mastered because it is more easily understood. In the same way,

374 Galilei's remarks against the anthropomorphic view of nature, Div. Fragm. = *Opere* IV, 24; *Dialogo* I = *Opere* VII, 126 f. On Descartes see below, Chapter IV, Section 3b.

375 Bacon describes the investigation of *causae finales* as "sterile" (*Augm. Scient.* III,5 = *Works* I, 571). For Hobbes, *causae finales* are nothing other than *causae efficientes* (*De Corp.* II, 10 § 7 = *OL* I, 117), following Descartes (*Med.*, Quint. Resp. = *AT* VII, 374). Laporte (*Le rationalisme de D.*, 343 ff.), who is reluctant to accept the Cartesian rejection of *causae finales*, misunderstands Descartes' position because he completely overlooks the polemical meaning of his statement that he does not know the purposes of God, and thus takes it at its nominal value (op. cit. 349, note 1).

376 *Discours* VI = AT VI, 62.

377 This attitude appears perhaps in its most typical form in Bacon. See Farrington, *Bacon, Philosopher of Industrial Science*, throughout.

natural necessity contributes to the mastery of natural processes by making them predictable from the outset and with reasonable certainty. In this sense, the disenchantment of nature solidified the certainty of dominion over it—and this certainty, in turn, gave the decisive impetus to the triumph of the *homo faber*.[378]

The option for dominion over nature through technology clearly has, at the very least, a worldview dimension, insofar as it entails an elevation of the *here and now*—in the form of the effort to make it more pleasant—and a corresponding devaluation of the *beyond*, often associated with a blessedness bought by earthly poverty and suffering.[379] While utilitarian, sociologically identifiable motives may have played a decisive role in this option, its ideological underpinning should by no means be neglected. For very practical and socially concrete aims often prevail not nakedly and in themselves, but by appealing to grand and inspiring ideas which, taken at face value, are sometimes only loosely connected to those aims. One such notion that greatly advanced modern science and technology was certainly what came to be celebrated as the ideal of the Promethean human. Here, the destruction of the hierarchies of the traditional cosmos and the astonishing discovery of the infinite universe are experienced as a moral challenge to the newly freed human being, who is called to measure himself against this infinity and to rise accordingly—in Promethean fashion. The infinity of the world becomes the infinity of

378 Arendt, *Vita activa*, 287 ff

379 On this worldview background of the turn to technology, see the incisive remarks by Spelth, *Innovation und Folgelast*, 95 ff. For reasons given in the text itself, I cannot fully accept Spelth's downplaying of the significance of the *Promethean self-consciousness* in favor of utilitarian considerations. Human societies had often found themselves in dire straits before the 17th century, without that leading to a tendency toward technology in the modern sense. Moreover, Spelth himself qualifies the importance of strictly utilitarian aspects when he points to the worldview context of the turn to technology: the shift toward the secular was not the result of a utilitarian attitude but rather the reverse.

On the utilitarian aspect in early modern natural science, see Brown, *The Utilitarian Motive*, esp. 182, 185 f., 190 ff., who identifies in this utilitarian orientation a key commonality between Baconian and Cartesian schools despite their well-known differences; cf. Clarke, *Science and Social Welfare*, throughout

the task—and the infinity of confidence (though this confidence is, even here, more polemically than logically grounded: it stems not from the certainty of soon achieving a clearly defined goal according to plan—especially since the task, as said, is infinite—but rather from the mere positing, the mere theoretical formulation of that goal, which enables the ideological combat against the opponent). This Promethean self-consciousness is typically expressed in Bruno,[380] whose example is particularly instructive because, although not actually a representative of mathematically grounded natural science closely tied to technology, he nonetheless sees in man's technical activity his chance to become a *dio della terra*—a "god of the earth.[381]" For a comprehensive view, it is important to note that this Promethean self-consciousness refers not only to modern man's position in the universe, but also to his role within history as a whole. Galileo expressed it with exemplary clarity when, rejecting the primacy of authority, he wrote that more recent opinions might be better precisely because they arose at a more mature stage of humanity's development.[382] Thus, modern man lays claim to the status of the fulfiller of history. It is no coincidence that this very idea, in strikingly similar formulation, appears in Bruno and Campanella just as in Bacon and Descartes.[383]

A confirmation of the thesis regarding the ideological

380 Cassirer, *Individuum*, 198 ff.; generally also Rice, *Wisdom*, 93 ff.

381 Spaccio III = *Opere II*, 152. Cf. Mondolfo, *L'Idea del progresso umano in G. B.*, in: *Figure e idee*, 223 ff.; Rüfner, *Homo secundus Deus*, esp. 267 ff.

382 Frammenti = *Opere VIII*, 640.

383 On these authors, see Gentile, *Veritas filia temporis*, in: *Bruno e il pensiero del Rinascimento*, 227 ff. Gentile's information should be supplemented by at least two references: decades before Bruno, a humanist like Vives expresses the same view (*De causis corruptarum artium* I, 6 = *Opera VI*, 41 f.); and it is hardly surprising that it also appears in Hobbes (*Leviathan*, *Review and Conclusion* = *EW III*, 712). For the connection to the humanist—whether cyclical or linear—concept of history, see Baron, *Querelle of Ancients and Moderns*, esp. 8 ff., 14 f. The paradox of the humanist conception lies in the fact that it regards the new age as more mature, while simultaneously treating the (idealized) Antiquity as a model (on this, Leyden, *Antiquity and Authority*, esp. 482 ff., 491 f.). This logical difficulty becomes understandable when one considers the polemical aim of the entire concept: both the glorification of Antiquity and the claim of maturity or autonomy of modernity are directed against the Church, even though they contradict each other. (Cf. Chapter VI, Section 4e.)

contribution of Humanism to the emergence of the scientific model is the striking concordance between the humanist glorification of man and the conception of man's place in the universe which, as just shown, was necessarily implied by the scientific model (indeed, by the very possibility of such a model at all). For all the ostentatiously displayed piety of the humanists, their constant hymns to the greatness of man—however rhetorical and practically non-binding they may have been—had, at the very least, to border indirectly on the kind of *hubris* that, from the theological perspective, also rendered the dreams of dominion by the *homo faber* so audacious. Manetti's treatise *De dignitate et excellentia hominis*, written around the middle of the 15th century and directed polemically against the Christian doctrine of human powerlessness, as extremely advanced by Innocent VIII (*De contemptu mundi*), was, tellingly, placed on the Index by the Spanish Inquisition in 1584.[384] An activist tone already resounds in Pico's *Oratio de dignitate hominis*, in which the most admirable trait in man is seen as his ability to make himself into anything—highest or lowest—he chooses: "*nullis angustiis coercitus*.[385]" Human achievements, then, are not to be attributed to divine gift, but rather to determined conquest and personal effort. Ficino, for his part, remarks at one point in his main work that the distinction between man and animal lies in man's ability, through his technical and inventive activity, to alter nature for his own use—or even to replace it. It is as if we are "*non servi simus naturae sed aemuli.*[386]" A crucial new dimension of the humanist-Platonic spiritualism of the Renaissance, which at first glance may appear to serve the ascetic ideal, is manifest in such statements: namely, the belief in the mind's capacity to dominate the sensible. (This aspect, incidentally, aligns well with the intellectualist tendency of mathematical natural science.) Viewed from this angle, Ficino's elaborate defense of the immortality of the human soul also acquires a meaning other than the orthodox Christian one. It has rightly been noted that Ficino's defense and Pomponazzi's denial of immortality ultimately stem from the same respect for the dignity of man.[387]

384 An analysis of Manetti's work is offered by Gentile, *Bruno e il pensiero del Rinascimento*, 74 ff. Cf. Napoli, *Contemptus mundi e Dignitas hominis*, 9 ff.

385 De hominis dignitate, 106.

386 Theol. Plat. XIV, 3 (= II, 223).

387 Gentile, *Bruno e il pensiero del Rin.*, 28, n. Cf. Kristeller, *Ficino e Pomponazzi*,

Whereas the former aims to affirm the imperishability of human worth, the latter seeks to make man's moral disposition—and thus man himself—pure: that is, free from any fear of punishment or hope for reward in the afterlife.[388]

The scientific model's linkage to a dynamic and optimistic anthropology was able to compensate for the loss of humanity's immediate protection by divine Providence, and thus made a decisive contribution to the establishment of a new value system—one that aimed to counter the accusation of nihilism leveled by its opponents. The normative function of this intellectually oriented wing of early modern rationalism gained all the more importance as the rapid emergence and massive spread of (empiricist) skepticism appeared to confirm suspicions of nihilism. In light of this importance, and before we turn to the discussion of early modern skepticism, we must once again recall all the reasons previously mentioned that created and intensified the normative appeal of the scientific model.

b) Man as Nature and Skepticism

One can only downplay—or explain superficially—the astonishingly vital reemergence of a consistent skepticism after centuries of uncontested dominance by normative thinking (in its Christian form), if one is, for whatever reason, unwilling to recognize the internal logical threads that bind the structure of skepticism to essential—or by definition inherent—aspects of modern rationalism. This insight is fundamental for understanding the contradictions in the development of modern rationalism, as they became especially visible during the Enlightenment and remain no less oppressive today (one need only think of the problem of grounding values). As previously stated, in order for the polemic against the theological worldview to be complete, it had to assert—or aim at—both the revaluation of nature and the emancipation of man. The connection of these two ideal aims was, in polemical terms, unproblematic and functionally effective, but it proved highly problematic—and logically ambiguous—once the common opponent had been overcome and the relation between the two allied aims themselves came into focus. If the emancipated human

esp. 224.

388 Douglas, *Philosophy and Psychology of Pomponazzi*, 248 ff.

being—turned away from heaven and toward nature—can dominate nature by grasping its laws, then that same nature, now all-powerful due to its elevation over God, in turn dominates man: for once he has emancipated himself from God, he is primarily seen as a part—however prominent—of nature, i.e., as a biological being subject to natural laws. Man is nature—and if he dominates nature through technology, he himself remains dominated by nature (above all, through his sensually and biologically conditioned nature). Here the paths of the intellectualist tendency aligned with the mathematical model of nature and that of skepticism diverge. The former emphasizes the sovereignty of human intellect and its mastery over the irrational animalistic elements of man's nature. It keeps man and nature conceptually distinct: nature as object, intellect as detached and analytical. For skepticism, anti-intellectualist and naturalist in orientation, the opposite is true: man does not stand over against nature but dissolves into it—losing all specificity. He becomes a mere case of natural law, another manifestation of natural necessity. Even according to the general presuppositions of the new conception of nature, man could not be fundamentally exempted from natural necessity—without endangering the very revaluation of nature itself, which, as we've seen, is inseparably tied to the idea of necessity as nature's inner logic. (The moral implications of the thesis that man is merely a case of natural necessity are obvious. One could generalize and say that the history of modern moral philosophy consists of attempts to evade or outwit this idea of necessity. Hence, the natural-philosophical and moral-philosophical aspects of modern rationalism often fall into open contradiction.) From this logical ambiguity arises the possibility that differing emphases emerge when speaking of natural necessity. For some, it guarantees predictability and thus mastery over nature; it is a reason for confidence, even in a broad moral sense, as it enables the unfolding of human capacities—viewed thus, it becomes a gift from Mother Nature. For skeptics, by contrast, the logic of nature offers no morally positive side. They too believe in natural necessity (when skeptics emphasize the role of chance, it is more an attack on the scientific intellect's claim to grasp and dominate all via the concept of necessity), but it is no longer a reason for hope—it is the beginning of resignation. For blind natural necessity seems to destroy not only the freedom of the will—without which morality

cannot be taken seriously—but also to rob the world of any objective meaning.

From the revaluation of nature and the associated idea of natural necessity, two fundamentally different conclusions can be drawn regarding the position of man in the world. In both cases, however, the primacy of anthropology remains untouched—since, as we know, it was ideologically bound up with the revaluation of nature. Only now, this primacy itself can take on fundamentally different meanings. The conviction that man is the measure of all things can indeed be interpreted to mean that man is the highest value, the constant point of reference and orientation—but also that there is no absolute truth and no genuinely objective value; that truths and values depend on the perspective of the human intellect, which is conditioned by countless "contaminating" factors, and are therefore perishable and replaceable. This ambiguity casts its dark shadow over the entire development of modern rationalism and is felt with particular intensity and pain during the Enlightenment. If it had to remain silent for long periods—even among many significant thinkers—this was due to the needs of the polemic against the traditional theological construct. From that polemical perspective, the emancipation of man from the bonds of that tradition seemed identical with liberation *as such*. Even the subjection of man to natural necessity ultimately meant, if that identity is simply assumed, his liberation—because it removed him from the jurisdiction of the divine will as interpreted and represented by the Church. In the enthusiasm of emancipation, its possible consequences were often overlooked. Only in this way can we explain the paradox that man's status reaches its height precisely at the moment he is expelled from the center of the universe. The geocentric thesis was defended by the opponent, and since freedom and opposition to that opponent were bound together, victory over his theses—regardless of their content—was *ipso facto* seen as a step toward freedom.

The dialectic whereby originally emancipatory positions are transformed into the logical starting points of skepticism is a major phenomenon in the history of modern rationalism (especially the Enlightenment bears its mark) and can be illustrated through central examples. I would like to briefly discuss two of them here: the rehabilitation of human sensuality and the evaluation of the function of skepticism itself. The thesis that man is nature—which would

shortly thereafter become the foundation of skepticism—was originally formulated with emancipatory intent, i.e., for the sake of defending the rights of human sensuality against Christian asceticism. Within the humanist movement, this tendency can be seen in the growing interest in Epicurus. Most notably, Filelfo explicitly connects his admiration for the Greek philosopher with the struggle for the full rehabilitation of sensual man; in the radicalism of this question, Valla comes closest to him.[389] Even spiritualists like Ficino did not adopt the Church's orthodox condemnation of Epicurus, provided they limited true pleasure to spiritual matters.[390] Vanini's later appeal to Epicurus[391] already appears to confirm the Church's suspicion that hedonism and atheism somehow belong together. Even Aristotelian ethics—centered on the ideal of a balanced personality based on the doctrine of *μεσόθης*—was predominantly interpreted during the Renaissance in an anti-ascetic sense.[392] Yet these are only the most striking philosophical side effects of the new sensitivity to the needs of human sensuality. Its origin lies much deeper than the rediscovery and reinterpretation of texts, since the recognition of man's naturalness represents only one aspect—though perhaps the most practically important—of the general worldview revaluation of nature. A revaluation which, in its polemical thrust against the theological scale of values, unmistakably possesses a normative dimension of its own. Indeed, the cheerful readiness to view man (also) as nature stems from the conviction that nature is in itself something good, virtually the embodiment of all norms; hence, the turn to nature could be experienced as the path to true freedom, worthy of man. Skepticism does not arise at the point of this revaluation of nature as such (after all, it itself emerges within the context of this revaluation and the dismantling of the Christian ontological hierarchy), but only with the question of how this nature is to be determined (cf. our earlier remarks on the two conceptions of natural necessity). Depending on one's stance toward the normativist

389 Garin, *Ricerche sull'epicureismo del Quattrocento*, in: *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento*, 82 f.; Saitta, *La Rivendicazione di Epicuro nel Umanesimo*, in: *Filosofia italiana e Umanesimo*, 65 ff., 69 ff.

390 Garin, op. cit., 84 ff.; Allen, *The Rehabilitation of Epicurus*, 9 f.

391 Allen, loc. cit., 13 f.

392 Garin, *La fortuna dell'etica aristotelica nel Quattrocento*, in: *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento*, 60 ff.

interpretation of nature, two fundamentally different meanings of the thesis *man is nature* arise. Yet the thesis itself remains intact as a formal common denominator—serving to conceal, and often having concealed, the inner ambiguity and thus the dialectic transformation of emancipation into skepticism. Once this ambiguity becomes visible, however, it necessarily inhibits the emancipatory drive, which is why modern normativism often found itself compelled to abandon the thesis *man is nature* in favor of the claim that *man rules over nature*—or, expressed in moral-philosophical terms, that he rules over his own nature—as its path to the future.

Skepticism, too, begins in the modern era as a polemical-emancipatory gesture. It aims to shake the traditional, authoritatively presented certainties in order to clear the way for new conceptions. The attainment of firm truth after the removal of prevailing "dogmatism" is regarded as more or less certain—indeed, it seems to result almost automatically from that removal, as if it were the inversion of "dogmatic" positions brought about by skeptical negation. This early skepticism is therefore not the antechamber of resignation but the herald of struggle, and thus of a new victorious certainty. Cusanus's *docta ignorantia*, rightly described as a "polemical concept,[393]" is a paradigmatic precursor of this type of skepticism, which is far removed from incurable agnosticism or moral indifferentism. Even earlier, however, Petrarch had made room for polemical skepticism in order to underpin epistemologically his rejection of all authority: if ultimate truths are reserved for God alone, then no human being—not even Aristotle—may be venerated as an authority.[394] Ironically, Valla too, citing biblical passages, points to the impotence of the human intellect in order to subtly undermine the Catholic doctrine of free will.[395] An argument that early Christianity once deployed against the arrogance of pagan philosophy[396] now turns against the intellectually refined Christianity of its own time! In Valla's tactics we see the refunctionalization of Christian commonplaces in favor of a new worldview orientation. The motif of the impotence of the human intellect continues to play a prominent

393 Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* I, 29.
394 De sui ipsis et multorum ignorantia, 76, 74.
395 De libero arbitrio, 181.
396 Paulus, 1 Corinthians 1, 17–25.

role later on, especially when the aim is to replace the (inherently unknowable) God with (in principle knowable) nature as the main object of human thought, thereby silently but effectively rendering the dominant ontological hierarchy irrelevant—even if it is not openly overturned. When we read, for instance, in Leonardo,[397] Bruno,[398] or Bacon—[399]just to name a few typical examples—about the limits of human knowledge or the unknowability of metaphysical-divine matters, we are encountering precisely this polemically intended reinterpretation. Closely connected to this is the thesis that science must begin in doubt. This idea was repeatedly and explicitly formulated before Descartes—not least by Bacon[400] and Galileo—[401] and it was clearly directed against the often-invoked authority of the opponent. Notably, doubt lasted only as long as that authority had not yet been theoretically overcome. When the thesis *man is nature* took a decidedly pessimistic turn and thus gave rise to a different kind of skepticism, the ambiguity—indeed, the danger—of playing with radical doubt became apparent. But it was not abandoned, and it could not be abandoned, because polemical skepticism remained tactically indispensable—due to the enduring social strength of the ecclesiastical-theological opponent—well into the Enlightenment.

Given all this, it would certainly be superficial to trace the emergence of skepticism merely to the general revival of Greek philosophy during the Renaissance.[402] For one must first explain why the ancient skeptics were even perceived as interesting in the first place. It is also very one-sided—and potentially misleading—to name, as the sole real cause for the rise and spread of early modern skepticism, alongside the rediscovery of Sextus, the spiritual crisis triggered by the Reformation.[403] Undoubtedly, the Protestant claim that the individual conscience should determine the true meaning of

397 Tagebuch, 36.
398 De la Causa II = *Opere* I, 176.
399 Interpretation of Nature, I = *Works* III, 218.
400 Advancement of Learning I = *Works* III, 293.
401 Brief to Castelli, 3 Dec 1639 = *Opere* XVIII, 125.
402 So Richter, *Der Skeptizismus in der Philosophie* II, 60; while Richter emphasizes the connection between skepticism and empiricism (II, 150), he seems hardly aware of the symptomatic significance of this fact.
403 Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, xii, 1 ff. (cf. 17 ff. on the history of the rediscovery of Sextus).

Scripture led to anarchy of interpretation, and thereby indirectly to skepticism—an outcome from which the Catholics understandably drew the conclusion that Church authority was necessary. But within this constellation, the essential aspect of early modern skepticism remains scarcely visible. For what is being demanded here is merely the elimination of skepticism through the authority of an institution (the Church), which is nonetheless assumed to be in possession of the truth—or at least not far from it. The existence and practical relevance of truth are not fundamentally questioned in the confessional conflict—only the opponent's right to speak in its name.[404] Even Erasmus, who evokes the specter of potential skepticism against Luther's absolutization of individual conscience, remains otherwise convinced of the general correctness of the Catholic position. Real skepticism arises here only in the mind of a third party—someone who is either a detached observer or a seeker who has not (yet) found.

We approach the specific character of early modern skepticism much more closely when we view the age of the Reformation and the religious wars from the perspective of the emerging modern state. In order to put an end to the chaos of religious wars, the absolutist state had to decisively set aside the question of truth. Tolerance and peaceful coexistence—aimed at preserving and enhancing the power of the community organized as a state over and against other communities—only become possible once the state renounces the imposition of the one "true" religion upon its subjects. Its authority no longer lies in having identified and mandated *the* truth but, on the contrary, in having placed itself above truth—declaring it a private matter. Hobbes's famous dictum *auctoritas non veritas facit legem*[405] ("authority, not truth, makes the law") was anticipated in the positions of the French *Politiques*, whose theoretical foundation lay in eliminating the truth question for the sake of domestic peace.[406] This elimination constitutes the essential point of contact with skepticism—and it is no coincidence that it was precisely skeptics, who emphasized

404 The best account of the confessional conflict at the intersection of Catholic and Protestant power claims with purely political ones is still, in my opinion and knowledge, Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the 16th Century*, passim.
405 Leviathan XXVI = *OL* III, 202.
406 Lecler, *Geschichte der Religionsfreiheit*, II, 109 ff., 127 ff.; Schmurr, *Die französischen Juristen im konfessionellen Bürgerkrieg*, passim.

the relativity and perishability of moral systems and truths, as well as the finitude and sensuous conditioning of the human intellect, who became enthusiastic supporters of the absolutist state.[407] The subordination of the truth question to the needs of the state as a power-structure is clearly tied to the long-burning question, since the early modern period, of the relationship between Machiavellianism as a theory of the power-state and a skeptical attitude. Conservatives in particular were fond of lumping together Machiavellianism, skepticism, immorality, and atheism.[408] While such an undifferentiated perspective is not especially fruitful from a scholarly standpoint,[409] it nevertheless contains a kernel of truth: namely, that the cold-blooded instrumentalization of religion by those in power presupposes an indifference to its truth content—and to the truth question more generally. (Believers, too, may consciously or unconsciously conjoin the defense of their faith with the pursuit of concrete political goals—but this more often gives rise to fanaticism than to the kind of skepticism being discussed here.) In some now-infamous passages,[410] Machiavelli had appraised the value of religion purely functionally—as a tool for disciplining society and serving political ends. Those who insisted on the close kinship between Machiavellianism and atheism were likely scandalized less by

407 This core issue is not addressed at all by Popkin. Pintard had already pointed out that skeptics or *érudits libertins* belonged to the "avant-garde du mouvement absolutiste" (*Le libertinage érudit*, 558 ff.). Abel has recently emphasized this connection as well (*Stoizismus und frühe Neuzeit*, esp. 163, 167, 210 f. and passim).

408 See for example the characteristic depiction of the English situation in Buddey, *Atheism in the English Renaissance*, 31 ff. Cases like that of Christopher Marlowe, who was not particularly pious and influenced by Machiavelli (129 f.), rarely justify blanket accusations.

409 One example of this is Charbonnel, *La pensée italienne au XVIe siècle et le courant libertin*, which traces the spread of Italian thought and Machiavellianism in France (esp. 11 ff., 617 ff.). Averroism, atheism, magic, materialism, etc., are treated rather indiscriminately in this book and presented as sources of libertinism. Similarly, Spink's recent work on French "Free-Thought," which largely covers the same material, does not show much conceptual clarity despite philological diligence.

410 Discorsi I, 11–14 = *Opere*, 122–132.

Machiavelli's view that Christianity, as an otherworldly religion,[411] was ill-suited to foster patriotic spirit, than by his conviction that even false religions and doctrines—whose origins could be traced to the calculated deception of a cunning ruler—could nonetheless fulfill their useful, desirable function. It was this reduction of religion to political utility, threatening the very substance of religion itself, that thinkers like Campanella could not forgive in Machiavelli or the *Politiques*.[412] And the rift was unbridgeable. For the opposition was between normativist thinking and that stark distinction between *is* and *ought*, already made explicit by Machiavelli,[413] which would become constitutive of modern skepticism.

The connection between Machiavellianism—or modern statism—and early modern skepticism runs deeper than this assessment of religion alone suggests. If we trace the thread carefully, it leads us to the logical core of the matter: namely, to the implication-rich thesis that man is nature. Just as the Machiavellian state ranks its own self-preservation higher than the question of truth, so too does man—if he is nature—place self-preservation above any ultimate, metaphysically grounded truth; truth here exists in the service of self-preservation, and for that very reason is relative and mutable, as the historical fate of religions claiming absolute truth illustrates. It follows from the logic of the socio-intellectual constellation that Machiavelli's political doctrine is accompanied by a naturalistic anthropology (the same structural link exists, incidentally, in Hobbes). Whether consciously or unconsciously, the deeper motive of human action is here a striving for power, which represents the necessary further development of the instinct for self-preservation—since this can only be secured after surviving competition with the self-preservation or power-striving of others. Without the expansion of one's own power, long-term self-

411 The English controversies are typical: see Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 62 ff., 78 ff., 100 f.; cf. Buddey, *Atheism in the English Renaissance*, 89.

412 Meinecke, *Idee der Staatsräson*, 123 ff.

413 Principe XV = *Opere*, 50:
"Perché egli è tanto discosto da come si vive a come si doverrebbe vivere, che colui che lascia quello che si fa per quello che si doverrebbe fare, impara più tosto la ruina che la preservazione sua."

preservation is not possible at all.[414] In this striving for power, we see the final consequence of the drive for self-preservation, and simultaneously the extreme subordination of the intellect—traditionally tasked with normative duties—to the commands of impulses rooted in man's natural constitution. It is therefore unsurprising that, in the 16th century, the thesis *man is nature* found expression not least in the form of an emphasized insistence on the instinct for self-preservation. The idea of self-preservation was, of course, not new—at least since Aristotle—but it now emerges in sharpened form, with the *hoti* (that it is) becoming the absolute value in itself, no longer needing to justify itself by reference to the *dioti* (why it is). The teleological-normative dimension thus falls by the wayside.[415]

Eliminating the teleological idea (at least in its traditional form) could only tighten the connection between the concept of self-preservation and the notion of human naturalness—something particularly evident in Telesio. For him, self-preservation is central because,[416] as has rightly been noted, he turns psychology into a chapter of physics and treats man more as a physician and physiologist than as a philosopher.[417] A few decades earlier, Vives had justified the necessity of studying the affects by pointing to the instinct for self-preservation: affects arise from it, do not allow it to weaken, and in turn serve it by informing the body of what is harmful or beneficial and orienting it accordingly. With a view to future moral-philosophical debates, a rather offhand remark from Vives is important: from the standpoint of the instinct for self-preservation, good and beneficial coincide, just as bad and harmful do.[418] Vives's example is instructive precisely because he generally remains a conservative, Christian-leaning humanist. His awareness of the power of affects and of sensuality in general fills him with dread—indeed, with disgust—and for this reason he calls for their draconian restraint

414 Machiavelli states this explicitly regarding states in Discorsi I, 6 = *Opere*, 109; but he thinks similarly when describing the political careers of individuals. The same idea plays a central role in Hobbes as well (*Leviathan* XI = *EW* III, 86).

415 See the excellent remarks of Spaemann, *Reflexion und Spontaneität*, 54.

416 Cf. above

417 Corsano, *La psicologia di Telesio*, 6.

418 De Anima, Book III, beginning = *Opera* III, 421 f.

through religion.[419] The intellectually characteristic point remains, however, that he carefully studies the affects in their connection to the instinct for self-preservation. His harsh judgment of them is merely the flip side of acknowledging their enormous influence on human behavior. Thus, even before it had been fully liberated, sensuality had to be curbed again. This problem arose not only for devout, troubled Christians, but also (and even more urgently) for thinkers who had to some extent emancipated themselves from orthodox Christianity but still did not want to expose themselves to suspicions of immoralism or nihilism. (The weight of the moral-philosophical aspect in anthropological-psychological inquiries at that time is unambiguously revealed by the fact that the two most hotly debated questions in 16th-century literature were those of the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will.)[420] In my view, the popularity of Stoic doctrines in the 16th and 17th centuries[421] is primarily due to the fact that they

419 De Concordia IV, 4 = *Opera* V, 342 ff. in conjunction with *Introductio ad Sapientiam* VIII § 209 = *Opera* I, 17 and *De Traditione Disciplinarum* V, 3 = *Opera* VI, 402.
Cf. the analysis by Noreña, *Vives*, 200 ff. In contrast to Pico della Mirandola, Vives always thinks of human weakness and does not believe in a divinization of man (see Colish, *The Mime of God*, esp. 9 f., 11 f.).

420 Schüling, *Bibliographie der psychologischen Literatur*, subject index under: "arbitrium liberum" and "immortalitas animae" (p. 292 and 294 f.).

421 On the elevation of the affects within the new conception of the unity and naturalness of man, see Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, 416 f., 422 ff., who emphasizes the function of the revival of Stoic doctrines in this context. However, Dilthey overestimated Stoic influence by attempting to derive the entire "natural system" from it (e.g., 315 f., 441 f.). In this sense, Blumenberg's criticisms (*Selbsterhaltung und Beharrung*, 3 f., 12) are valid, though Abel relativizes them by noting that Neostoicism took on "modern functions" (*Stoizismus und frühe Neuzeit*, 23 f.).
The tactically useful plasticity of Stoic thought is evident in the fact that it gave rise to two—though only ideally distinguishable—main currents: one promoting the separation of Christian and secular morality and thus paving the way for libertinism; the other staying close to Christian morality by insisting on the strict subordination of the affects to reason.
See the fine analysis by Levi, *French Moralists*, 67 ff., 85 ff., 330, who highlights the many entanglements of Christian and Stoic thought, as well as the link between the modern reevaluation of the affects and the Christian-pessimistic conception of man (119 ff., 129 ff., 209 ff.). This connection, already

offered a viable, two-sidedly open middle path—a compromise acceptable to wide circles. In ancient Stoicism, in general, the knowledge of the nature and effects of affects and sensuality was combined with the demand for their mastery—or rather, their permeation—by reason, and this on the basis of a monistically oriented anthropology, so that no world-denying asceticism arose from it.[422] In other words, Stoic theses were flexible enough to allow at least formal agreement with Christian doctrine while simultaneously undermining it.

The thesis of man's fundamental naturalness was further confirmed by the advances in physiology and anatomy—just as these advances were themselves motivated by a worldview-driven interest in that naturalness. This reciprocal dynamic can explain the "puzzling" fact for some researchers that the progress of anatomy was as slow before the 16th century as it was rapid afterward.[423] A flood of anatomical works appears especially after 1520, and it is almost symptomatic for the physiognomy and development of early modern rationalism that the major works of Copernicus and Vesalius were published in the same year (1543). The truly gripping history of physiology and anatomy in the early modern period[424] cannot concern us here in detail. What must be emphasized, however, is the rise of a tendency that intensified especially in the Enlightenment: the systematic articulation of the close interweaving of bodily and mental functions—a development that directly or indirectly supported the conviction of the dependence and limitation, if not the parasitic character, of the intellect. This development becomes evident first in the emphasis on anatomical similarities between humans and animals;

encountered in Vives (cf. note 356), would soon play an important intellectual-historical role and enable a convergence of fideism and skepticism (see end of this section).

The variety of Stoic trends is also well captured by the useful overview by d'Angers, *Pascal*, 143 ff., who devoted several essays in the same work (see p. 7 n. 2) to the question of the revival of Stoicism in the 16th–17th centuries.

422 Dittrich, *Geschichte der Ethik* II, 19 f.; Pohlenz, *Stoa* I, 119, draws attention to the difficulty of reconciling monistic anthropology with the supremacy of the *logos*.

423 Boas, *Renaissance der Naturwissenschaften*, 143.

424 On this see Cole, *History of Comparative Anatomy*; more generally Callot, *Renaissance des sciences de la vie*.

Leonardo's remarks on this are well-known and exemplary.[425] But the parallel was also extended to psychic functions. On the one hand, the new physiognomy sought to deduce traits of human character from similarities between a person's facial features and those of a given animal;[426] on the other hand, people went so far as to compare human and animal intelligence. Since the latter was not regarded as divine, the comparison itself implied that both were rooted in biology. Against the backdrop of this purely biological-functionalist view, Rorarius could even claim that animals often made better use of reason than humans.[427] The morally and normatively charged nature of the question of the relationship between man and animal is self-evident; it is also the reason why this issue remained at the center of fierce debate throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

The thesis of man's naturalness rested on the demonstration of the mind's double dependency—on the one hand, on biological factors and the affects connected to them, and on the other, on the geographically and socio-historically determined environment. The era that saw the *discovery* of the human body largely coincided with the era of the *discovery* of the Earth and its peoples. Their diversity was, for the first time in history, rendered so vividly that it raised the question of the commonalities and the very nature of the human species—as one can see, for instance, in some of Bruno's remarks.[428] The many travel

425 Tagebuch, 78.

426 The physiognomics became popular in the 16th century and is in itself symptomatic of the attitude discussed here. See Schüling, *Bibliographie der psychologischen Literatur*, subject index, 298, and the illuminating plates at the end of the work.

427 So reads the title of the book he wrote in 1544 and which was published in 1645: *Quod animalia bruta saepe ratione utantur melius homine*.

428 De imm. VII, 18 (= OL I, 2, 282). The transformation of historical thought in the 16th and 17th centuries has been concisely and precisely described by Klempt. In the context of the dissolution of the theological-eschatological total interpretation of universal history, he examines "the unlocking of the worldly aspect of the material universality of human history"—which, besides opening up the temporal perspective through the destruction of the biblical world chronology, also entails a cultural-historical and a spatial-geographical-ethnographic component (*Die Säkularisierung der universalhistorischen Auffassung*, esp. 34 ff., 63 ff., 114 ff.).

reports of the time[429] intensified astonishment at the diversity of the human and provided rich material for the debates surrounding it. For the multiplicity of peoples also meant the multiplicity of customs, laws, ways of thinking—in short: of values. Through classification of what had been handed down by the ancients and newly discovered by contemporaries, an attempt was made to bring order to the initially chaotic impression. The book by J. Boemus, published in 1520, exerted great influence in this direction.[430] Not only did the observation of variability, the never-ending cycle of rise and fall of peoples and cultures, foster skepticism—not only the recognition of essential differences between one's own value system or way of thinking and those of others—but just as much the discovery of potential *similarities* with the latter: the feeling of the uniqueness and irreplaceability of one's own norms (especially of one's own religion) began to falter.[431] Precisely in the effort to explain the undeniable diversity, people now turned to man's naturalness—his determination by sensory factors. As in antiquity, one first reverts to interpreting national character through climate,[432] a theory also maintained in the 16th century by Bodin.[433] The one-sidedness and superficiality of such interpretations is not the point here. What matters is the growing willingness to reduce the spiritual to the sensual, to view culture no longer as the product of a particular intellectuality—emerging from a people's relationship to God—but as something sensually conditioned and geographically located. The first elementary form of a theory of culture or of anthropology arises from the intersection of two insights: the importance of geographic-sociohistorical sensibility, and the new appreciation of the drive for self-preservation. Man as nature and nature as the environment of man-as-nature are thought together. The theoretical and historical starting point of cultural anthropology thus

429 Illustrative examples in Slotkin (ed.), *Readings in Early Anthropology*, 44 f. and 468 (notes 69, 70).

430 On the problematics of early ethnology Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, 131 ff., 162 ff. The book by Boemus bears the characteristic title: *Omnium gentium mores, leges et ritus ex multis clarissimis rerum scriptoribus*.

431 Cf. the remarks by Hodgen, 263 f., 295 ff.

432 On the climate theories of antiquity and their revival in the 16th century, see Johnson, *Of Differing Ages and Climes*, esp. 468 f., 473 f., 476 f.

433 De la Rép. V, 1 (= S. 663 ff.); Methodus V (= S. 79 ff.).

becomes man fighting for his own existence in a particular environment. In the successive stages of this struggle, first the sensual needs are satisfied, then the intellectual ones are awakened and satisfied, and so on. (Vives's extensive schema of cultural anthropology[434] is very interesting in this regard; as we know, similar ideas are found in Cardano.)[435] The history of culture becomes the history of the emergence of the mind, which thereby reveals itself in its dependence and relativity—as both theoretical and practical-moral mind. In other words: values are not absolute, but products of culture, products of arbitrary establishment, products of utility. The decisive step toward skepticism is taken. As an example, I would again cite Machiavelli, who—in a largely overlooked passage—[436]presents such a theory of cultural development, in which he formulates the thesis, later taken up by Hobbes, that the concepts of good and evil are products of convention and, as such, functions of power: they arise together with power at a certain stage of cultural development.

The dramatic change in the moral-philosophical perspective in the early modern period is evident in the new meaning that the term *philosophia moralis* acquired—a meaning almost directly opposed to the traditional one. An early example of this symptomatic terminological shift appears, not coincidentally, in a book that—however superficial or confused it may be—expresses skeptical tendencies and achieved wide circulation: Agrippa of Nettesheim's *De incertitudine*. According to Agrippa, "*philosophia de moribus*" must not be based on "*philosophorum ratiunculis*" but only on the observation of life—and, above all, it is not eternally given but should be "*pro temporum, locorum hominumque opinione mutabile*"; for vice and virtue may, depending on time and place, turn into their opposites.[437] Translated into modern terms, this clearly implies that descriptive observation has displaced

434 De trad. discipl. I, 1 (= Opera VI, 243 ff.).

435 S. o. Anm. 134.

436 Discorsi I, 2 (= Opere 96 f.).

437 De incert. et vanit. scient. LIV (= Opera II, 118). A symptom of the spread of skeptical sentiment in the 16th and 17th centuries is also the growing popularity of *paradoxes*, i.e., the deliberate reduction of ontological and epistemological questions to the level of logical games — which, however, simultaneously served to dissolve theological metaphysics. On this, see the book by Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, passim, who especially emphasizes the polemical-creative function of the paradox (33, 508 f.).

normative philosophy—precisely because the One Standard and the One Norm have been lost somewhere in the multiplicity of norms and standards. The *moralist* thus becomes merely an observer or analyst of customs and behaviors—not necessarily a philosopher who posits moral norms. In this new sense, the term (especially in France) went on to enjoy a long career of over two centuries, becoming associated with a number of celebrated names. The first classic of the genre, Montaigne —who, at least in terms of universality, remains its greatest figure— offers us an excellent inventory of all the essential factors and theses that, according to the account just given, gave rise to and shaped modern skepticism (incidentally, the statement from Agrippa just mentioned was known to Montaigne).[438] Given Montaigne's vast direct and indirect influence on the Enlightenment, I would like to now briefly and logically outline his most essential positions.

First and foremost, for Montaigne, the primacy of anthropology is a matter of course. He wishes to concern himself with man *alone*, that is, "armé seulement de ses armes, et depourvu de la grace et cognoissance divine.[439]" He distances himself from the *normativist* version of this anthropological primacy by declaring that, unlike others, he does not aim to *form* man, but to *depict* him.[440] This break from normativism is also served by his emphasis on man's total entrenchment in the sensual world. This entrenchment is twofold— both biological and social. As for the first, it is decisive simply because life itself is a "mouvement materiel et corporel.[441]" The rejection of spiritualism and intellectualism naturally coincides with the thesis that man, like other animals, is subject to the laws of nature.[442] The instinct for self-preservation forms that "loy vrayment naturelle" which governs the behavior of both man and beast alike[443] (and Montaigne's subtle sense for the ways this drive is modified under the conditions of developed society is evident in his analyses of overt and covert will to power and of vanity).[444] This dominance of the self-preservation

438 Villey, *Sources*, I, 61 f.; II, 173 ff.
439 I, 12 (= I, 493).
440 III, 2 (= II, 222).
441 III, 9 (= II, 431).
442 II, 12 (= I, 504 f.).
443 II, 8 (= I, 423); cf. II, 12 (= I, 593) and III, 12 (= II, 506).
444 Especially III, 9 (= II, 381 ff.).

instinct clearly relates to the tight interweaving (*estroite cousture*) of body and soul.[445] Montaigne observes the influence of bodily processes on the soul[446] and is far from speaking of the soul as a substance: he claims we can know nothing about it[447] and is by no means convinced of its immortality.[448] While Montaigne concedes that the soul *guides* behavior, this does not imply a firm rule of the intelligible over the sensible. Rather, the soul's governance of behavior *explains* its variability—hence the soul itself is highly unstable.[449] It is ruled by the affects[450] (which Montaigne tellingly calls *passions corporelles*),[451] and although these can be disapproved of by conscience or remorse, they cannot be subdued.[452] Since our *appetite* is "irresolu et incertain,[453]" the supposed power of the soul becomes, in this light, nothing but a clear sign of human weakness in general.[454]

The second aspect of man's rootedness in the sensual world concerns geographical and social factors. Montaigne believes that air, climate, and soil influence not only the physical constitution of man, but also his mental disposition.[455] Yet he is especially original and observant when he addresses the dependence of a people's or individual's way of thinking on the society in which they live. This dependency, in its various forms, is expressed by Montaigne primarily through his analysis of the omnipotence of *coutume*. "Coutume" for him is a broad concept—it encompasses not only custom and habit, but the entire social structure in all its layers and the mentality that accompanies it. Only this wide meaning reveals the full extent of our dependence on it: "nous les humons avec le laict de nostre naissance," and thus we form our first image of the world under its unconscious

445 I, 21 (= I, 108).
446 II, 12 (= I, 615 ff.).
447 II, 12 (= I, 605 ff.).
448 II, 12 (= I, 576, 617 ff.).
449 See the argument in I, 14 (= I, 56).
450 I, 34 (= II, 150).
451 II, 12 (= I, 636).
452 III, 2 (= II, 226).
453 I, 53 (= I, 343).
454 I, 53 (= I, 342).
455 II, 12 (= I, 646 f.).

influence—so that any talk of separating from it is misguided.[456] Convention ultimately shapes our view of things, and we scarcely ever reach their true essence.[457]

The double rootedness of man in the sensual world has a twofold consequence: perspectivism of all knowledge and relativity of all values. The former is already given by the fact that all knowledge begins and ends with the senses, which ultimately only constitutes the solemn *preuve de notre ignorance*.[458] Since the senses have authority over reason,[459] the latter becomes just as manifold as the former.[460] It comes down to the idea that the intellect, like wax, can be shaped into anything conceivable.[461] Thus, the perspectivism of knowledge becomes the herald of the relativity of values—in other words: the epistemological rejection of intellectualism is accompanied by moral-philosophical, sociologically grounded relativism. For the omnipotence of *coustume*, in the described sense, implies precisely the powerlessness or the absence of a free intellect capable of grasping final truths and norms. The reference to the concrete conditioning of one's situation proves fatal for intellectualism and normativism. Knowing and valuing are perspectival in the same sense and to the same extent. Montaigne, who can imagine a thousand contradictory ways of life,[462] feels compelled to speak of himself differently depending on the perspective from which he observes himself.[463] Only a few do consciously what all, driven by their will to power, do unknowingly. For everyone acts as if he were *la maistresse forme de la nature*,[464] and uses his own qualities as the standard by which to judge others.[465] The same holds for entire peoples: foreign customs seem to them simply barbaric, while their own alone appear rational.[466] Hence, what is

456 I, 23 (= I, 121).
457 II, 17 (= II, 31).
458 II, 12 (= I, 661).
459 II, 12 (= I, 669).
460 III, 13 (beginning).
461 II, 12 (= I, 634).
462 I, 37 (= I, 259).
463 II, 1 (= I, 369).
464 II, 32 (= II, 131 f.).
465 II, 12 (= I, 593).
466 I, 31 (= I, 234); III, 13 (= II, 535).

praised here may be condemned there,[467] or the monstrosities of one era may belong to the commonplaces of another.[468] Montaigne draws on his extensive knowledge of ancient historians and contemporary travel reports[469] to list a multitude of contradictory customs among various peoples, thereby laying bare their relativity.[470] From these observations he concludes that the only universal thing in opinions is their diversity,[471] and that they arise and perish just as natural things do.[472] All this culminates in the view that there are no eternal, innate ideas of natural law;[473] the very concept of a fixed law contradicts the changeability and diversity of our actions.[474] *"Il n'y a rien de juste en soi"*—what is just and what is socially useful are identical.[475] Laws do not arise from reason, but from power or *coustume*,[476] and they are not obeyed because they are just, but because they are laws.[477] Even the so-called laws of conscience, which we tend to regard as natural, arise from *coustume*.[478] Even the most irrational things become familiar to us through *coustume*, and are retroactively legitimized by reason.[479]

These lines of thought are certainly barely compatible with the worldview of the natural-scientific model—which in itself shows how deep the tensions within early modern rationalism have been from the very beginning. Montaigne had little sympathy for the intoxicating hope that man might become master over nature—[480]evidently because he knew too well the rule of nature (as body and affect) over human reason. Likewise, he mocks human complacency, which creates

467 II, 12 (= I, 652).
468 II, 12 (= I, 644 f.).
469 Villey, Sources, I, 76 (Balbi), 94 (Castañeda), 137 (Lopez de Gomara), 138 (de Mendoza), 202 (Postel) etc.
470 I, 23
471 II, 37 (= II, 203).
472 II, 12 (= I, 646).
473 II, 12 (= I, 652, 650 f.).
474 III, 3 (= II, 238).
475 III, 13 (= II, 523).
476 II, 12 (= II, 656).
477 III, 13 (= II, 524).
478 I, 23 (= I, 121).
479 I, 23 (= I, 116); cf. I, 36 (= I, 255 ff.); II, 12 (= I, 533 ff., 652 ff.).
480 z. B. II, 12 (= I, 594).

gods in man's image.[481] *Nous sommes partout vent*, he writes—[482]thus targeting both modern hubris and the anthropomorphism of traditional religion. Interestingly, his skepticism about the certainty of knowledge is directed both against scholastic and mathematical methodology. His statement that the impression of certainty is merely a sure sign of madness[483] is reinforced by polemics against the sterility of syllogistic reasoning[484] as well as against the pretensions of geometry.[485] His general mistrust of science underlies both his mockery of physicians[486] and his pronounced indifference toward the Copernican theory and its possible truth.[487] He was, of course, unfamiliar with the mature form of scientific thinking, yet he already sensed that it involved new totalizing explanations—that is, new abstractions and a new intellectualism. Against this, he asserts on the one hand the unfathomable depths of the human soul—*les profondeurs opaques de ses replis internes*—[488]and on the other hand his preference for the concrete and for history.[489] He is repelled by high-minded ontology in all its forms: *Je ne peints pas l'être. Je peints le passage.*[490] This choice, incidentally, also explains the fragmentary form of his work.

From such a solemn overall consideration of the human being, no binding *ought* can obviously be derived just like that. Nevertheless, for Montaigne, the renunciation of metaphysically-ontologically grounded truths and norms does not amount to total resignation in everyday life—on the contrary, he seems to draw his fearlessness before life precisely from the fact that only through such renunciation do the limits of the possible become visible. The basis for a realistic attitude toward oneself and others is thus a reconciliation with the human condition, a sober insight into human weakness. From skepticism arises gentleness; from understanding, forgiveness. In place

481 II, 12 (= I, 574).
482 III, 13 (= II, 566).
483 II, 12 (= I, 604).
484 II, 10 (= I, 455).
485 II, 12 (= I, 641 f.); II, 14 (= II, 8).
486 II, 37 (= II, 175 f.).
487 II, 12 (= I, 640).
488 II, 6 (= I, 414).
489 II, 10 (= I, 457 ff.).
490 III, 2 (= II, 222).

of rigid normativism emerges a morality of compromise—empirical, oriented toward the concrete situation, theoretically modest and practically unpretentious, alternating between success and hopelessness, always experimental. Since man is inconstant and often wicked, since small vices may be improved but great ones cannot be overcome,[491] a provisional (there is no definitive) solution lies in drawing positive effects from the passions themselves, cleverly playing one against the other, and thereby establishing functioning balances.[492] Montaigne's call to follow nature[493] is above all meant to underscore the necessity of considering the body and the affects in this broader sense. However, he by no means relies on the obedience to raw nature; he knows that even inhumanity can be natural,[494] and therefore demands the guidance of reason.[495] Yet by incorporating reason into this now expanded natural disposition of man, the concept of nature itself acquires a normative dimension. For this reason, Montaigne's reflections are often tinged with a certain ambiguity, especially concerning the meaning of *loi de nature*. But no skeptic can escape this ambiguity once he succumbs to the temptation of offering pedagogical prescriptions in any form whatsoever.

Montaigne's skepticism culminates in an affirmation of existing social powers in general and of religion in particular—something that gives his thought a conservative coloration.[496] This must be emphasized, for it is not merely a matter of temperament but is connected to the very premises of his thinking. It provides a deep insight into the contradictory nature of early modern rationalism, as it shows that its emancipatory ambitions could be blunted by arguments drawn not from revelation but from its own secular foundations. The roots of 18th-century nihilism thus reach back into the early modern period. Skepticism must reject the idea of progress in history (as

491 III, 12 (= II, 511).

492 This aspect is particularly emphasized by Frame (*Montaigne's Discovery of Man*, 105), though he generally overestimates Montaigne's pedagogical optimism. Much more convincing is Friedrich's account (*Montaigne*, 189 ff., 204 ff.).

493 III, 13 (= II, 526).

494 II, 11 (= I, 476).

495 II, 8 (= I, 424).

496 Brown, Religious and Political Conservatism in the *Essais*, esp. 69 ff.

Montaigne indeed does),[497] simply because it finds no forward-driving forces within it: human nature remains forever bound to the same affects and limitations. Moreover, the abolition of normativism entails that there can be no absolute norm as a goal toward which historical movement might aim. On the other hand, the perspectivism of knowledge and the relativity of values, if social life is to remain possible at all, demand the establishment of institutions capable of restraining the unpredictable forces of human nature or channeling them toward socially beneficial (i.e., political) ends. For Montaigne, religion is the *institution par excellence* in this regard; not truth, but *coustume* is its foundation, which is why even religions that differ in content can fulfill the same social function.[498] Religion must exist for the sake of this function; the instability of man is counterbalanced by the stability of institutions.[499] This argument is reminiscent of Machiavelli, whose writings Montaigne knew well.[500] However, in Montaigne, we also find an additional justification of religion—already often used before him—[501]that is no longer grounded in social utility, but in epistemology: if human knowledge is limited, then it can neither undermine nor replace religious belief.[502] Since there could be no doubt that Montaigne at least sincerely believed the first part of this argument, he appeared entirely credible when he invoked the whole. The combination of social and epistemological justifications of religion in his work has the effect of softening, at least in the eyes of sympathetic readers, the cynical edge of its merely utilitarian justification. Whether this suffices to call Montaigne a believer is doubtful. It has rightly been said that his book is not a work of faith, even if it was written by a man of faith—[503]implying that Montaigne could not be a "blessed believer" in the ecclesiastical sense. He gives us a clue to his position when he writes that the wise man should follow

497 II, 6 (= II, 339 ff.).
498 II, 12 (= I, 487).
499 II, 12 (= I, 647 ff.); I, 2 (= I, 127).
500 Villey, *Sources* I, 172; insightful comparisons between Montaigne and Machiavelli in Friedrich, *Montaigne*, 186 ff., 228 ff.
501 As noted by Erasmus, Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola, and Agrippa von Nettesheim, see Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 5, 19 f., 22 f.
502 II, 12 (= I, 482 f.).
503 Lanson, *Les Essais de Montaigne*, 264.

coustume and keep his innermost views to himself.[504] This could become hypocrisy—or a conviction so deep in the necessity of *coustume* (including religion) that its observance proceeds naturally, without causing inner conflict. In that case, distinguishing between the practically faithful and the theoretically skeptical part of the self would be meaningless. My impression is that Montaigne—of others and of himself—would at least want his position to be understood in this way.

Charron adopts Montaigne's maxim of the wise man's adaptation to utility and, in turn,[505] offers both the social-functional and the epistemological justification of religion,[506] while at the same time making an effort to give the impression of personal piety. If he does not always come across as fully convincing, it is due to the profane-anthropological orientation of his thought—which, though generally much poorer than Montaigne's, nevertheless contains some particularly interesting nuances.[507] There was constant debate over

504 I, 23 (= I, 125).

505 *De la Sagesse* II, 8 (= II, 206).

506 *De la Sagesse* III, 2 (= II, 300) and II, 5 (= II, 148). Elsewhere he emphasizes "diversité" and the power of "coutume" (II, 8 = II, 194 ff.). Even the "diversité" of religions is "moult effrayable"; each one fights the others while all simultaneously appeal to God; they impose themselves using purely human means and are dependent on circumstances (II, 5 = II, 119, 125 ff., 130 f.). Religion is socially useful, and therefore the sovereign should look after it (III, 2 = II, 300).

507 Also for Charron, man is the most important object of knowledge (I, 1 = I, 1 ff.). He does indeed reference Stoic-Christian commonplaces like *gnōthi seauton*, etc. (as his work overall is a compilation of very heterogeneous ideas, combining for example demonology and Aristotelianism), but in practice he proceeds according to the new, i.e., non-metaphysical, mode of consideration. He seeks to examine man "en son privé et en son à tous les jours" (I, 1 = I, 10). Significantly, the examination begins with the human body, which was supposedly created by God first: "le corps est l'aîné de l'âme, comme la matière de sa forme" (I, 2 = I, 17). Belief in immortality stems from human vanity, but it is socially useful (I, 8 = I, 73 f.); Charron therefore does not refute it, but neither does he explicitly affirm it. The prioritization of studying the body clearly stems from a strongly anti-ascetic stance (e.g., I, 23 = I, 167 ff.: *De l'amour marnel*; cf. III, 41 = III, 241 ff.). Man is a beast among others; chapter 35 of book one (= I, 203 ff.) bears the title *Comparaisons de l'homme avec les autres animaux*. Although Charron does say at one point that man is naturally good (II, 3 = II,

whether skeptics like Charron or La Mothe Le Vayer genuinely supported religion or subtly sought to undermine it.[508] Even Montaigne—initially seen as a friend of religion and appreciated by devout minds—was later predominantly classified as a libertine and treated accordingly:[509] times had become increasingly difficult for theology, which could no longer afford the luxury of ambiguous alliances. Indeed, the justification of faith merely by reference to the limits of human knowledge was intrinsically weak and also ambiguous—especially since the skeptical argument could also be interpreted to mean that, because of the impotence of human intellect, no final truth could be found as a foundation for social life, and thus conventions or illusions like religion were indispensable. But the faithful wanted to draw a direct conclusion from the impotence of reason to the truth of revelation. To do that, however, they had to accept a double logical leap, which partly explains the difficulties in aligning theology with skepticism. On the one hand, the leap from the acknowledgment of human ignorance to revelation is only necessary if one already assumes that ultimate truths exist somewhere and are indispensable (indispensable in a moral-normative sense, not merely a social-functional one, which even skeptics would admit). On the other hand, even if one grants the necessity of such a transition, it says nothing about the content of the revelation that is supposed to satisfy the human need: why should one prefer the Christian to the Mohammedan revelation—or vice versa?

Pascal, whose work marks the high point of a long apologetic tradition formed through engagement with skepticism,[510] likewise performs the double logical leap—as did many of his predecessors.[511]

82), this thesis is not reflected in the overall direction of his thought, which rather expresses a rejection of the ascetic implications of Christian anthropological pessimism. Much more extensively he discusses those "plus naturelles et universelles qualités" (I, 37 = I, 236) of man, which he defines as vanity, weakness, inconstancy, misery, presumption (I, 38–42 = I, 237–317).

508 Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 55 f., 60 ff., 96 ff.

509 Dreano, *La religion de Montaigne*, 277 ff.

510 D'Angers, *Pascal et ses Précurseurs*, passim.

511 Lacombe, *L'Apologétique de Pascal*, 311 f., summarizes the second aspect of this logical leap by stating that Pascal cannot derive the truth of Christianity simply from the assumption of the supernatural in general; he simply ignores the problem, and this undermines his apologetics.

But what matters for our purposes is something else in his approach. Pascal's aim—to turn the weapons used against Christianity into weapons for it—[512]rests on the correct observation that within modern rationalism itself, forces had emerged that contradicted its own emancipatory, anti-theological ambitions. In other words, he seeks to pit man as *nature* against man as *master of nature*, or as an aspiring god, and to use the demonstration of human weakness as the first step back toward God. (In doing so, however, he enters the modern terrain of the primacy of anthropology—provisionally, as he claims.) This is his own way of playing the "*renversement continuel du pour au contre*"[513] that he so acutely observed. On the one hand, he demands that man renounce his *amour propre, et cet instinct qui le porte à se faire Dieu*;[514] on the other hand, he reminds man of his own naturalness: *La nature de l'homme est toute nature, omne animal*.[515] Hubris, the adversary of God and Christianity, can just as well be refuted by skeptical arguments. Still, Pascal is uneasy in this alliance. Montaigne is right—but that he is *too* right can be dangerous.[516] Because Pascal wishes to use skepticism without remaining in it, he cautiously stresses the presence of an indestructible, uplifting instinct in man, despite the misery of his condition.[517] What bothers him about Montaigne is the "lascivious" tone and freethinking, and he claims to have adopted from him only what he already possessed internally.[518] Nevertheless, he uses the *Essais* directly and indirectly at length,[519] and—following Montaigne—places the emphasis on the uncertainty of knowledge,[520] which is rooted both in the dominance of the senses and affects,[521] and in the

512 *Entretien avec Saci* = *Oeuvres* IV, 55.
513 *Pensées* V, Fr. 328 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 247).
514 *Pensées* VII, Fr. 492 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 394).
515 *Pensées* II, Fr. 94 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 21).
516 As Brunschvicg notes beautifully, *Génie de Pascal*, 140.
517 *Pensées* VI, Fr. 411 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 311).
518 *Pensées* II, Fr. 64–65 (= *Oeuvres* XII, 66–67).
519 See the detailed textual comparison by Croquette, *Pascal et Montaigne*, esp. 107–109.
520 *Pensées* VII, Fr. 437 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 355).
521 *Pensées* II, Fr. 83 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 14).

effects of *coustume*.[522] Thus, alongside the condemnation of hubris, anti-intellectualism becomes a second point of convergence with skepticism. Pascal wishes to derive from the primacy of the heart over the intellect the primacy of faith—[523]but as we will see, in the 18th century this anti-intellectualism, primarily intended as a critique of Cartesianism, ended up serving skeptical and materialist tendencies, despite the pious intentions of many of its advocates.

Pascal, one of the most sensitive seismographs of the early modern period, senses that in the sharpening of oppositions, only clear decisions can bring remedy. On one side stand the *principes naturels*, on the other their skeptical deniers: *voilà la guerre ouverte entre les hommes, où il faut que chacun prenne parti*.[524] This dramatic statement reveals how deeply the danger of skepticism and nihilism was felt. No doubt these currents were, in purely quantitative terms, quite weak—especially since the Church still firmly controlled both private and public daily life.[525] Furthermore, accusations of atheism were often made rather indiscriminately.[526] Certainly, there were not as many atheists as there were people accused of atheism. One must also consider that not all who contributed to the emergence of an anthropology or cultural theory that ultimately encouraged skepticism were themselves skeptics (as we already noted with the example of Vives). Nevertheless, one should take seriously the fact that more and more apologetic writings and refutations of atheism were being published—[527]indicating an increasingly uncertain situation. Pascal's intense yearning, for instance, for a new, freer, and deeper religiosity—precisely one that, through its openness and plasticity, would be less vulnerable than rigid dogma—stems not least from the fear of skepticism. Reform becomes a form of preemptive defense. But that already amounts to an admission that the opponent has conquered important positions.

522 *Pensées* II, Fr. 92; III, Fr. 234 (reference to Montaigne — cf. V, Fr. 325) (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 19 f., 155 ff., cf. 243 f.).

523 *Pensées* IV, Fr. 248 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 181 f.); cf. fragment *De l'art de persuader*, *Oeuvres* IX, 272.

524 *Pensées* VI, Fr. 345 (= *Oeuvres* XIII, 261).

525 See the depiction by Febvre, *Le Problème de l'Incroyance*, 362 ff.

526 Febvre, *op. cit*., 138 ff.; Buddey, *Atheism in the English Renaissance*, 49 f.

527 In England especially after 1530, Buddey, *op. cit*., 61 ff.

c) Natural law in the 17th century and the three logical foundational possibilities of early modern rationalism

The ambiguous consequences of the primacy of anthropology became paradigmatically evident in 17th-century natural law, whose main versions are most closely linked with specific anthropological choices. Because anthropological issues played such a crucial role in the departure from the framework of the old worldview, this transformation of the rationalization process into a new ideological struggle necessarily bore its imprint. When the idea of man dominates the ideological field, then worldview conflicts must ignite around its interpretation—just as they had previously with the idea of God. The unbridgeable gulf between, for example, Grotius and Hobbes—which would come to divide the entire trajectory of modern rationalism—is already visible in their conception of human nature, a sign of the new centrality of anthropological assumptions. Yet the traditional adversary remained powerful, as did the shared desire to bring an end to religious and civil wars. But the concrete content of the formal frame must differ radically when *sensibility* is rehabilitated in different ways —this determines the anthropological option and its quasi-automatic entanglement with the value question. Even within the framework of natural law, we find that the purest form of normativism aligns with idealist-intellectualist positions and appeals to the structure of mathematically secured truth, whereas the view that values are mutable products of decisionist positing accompanies the conception of man as animalistic and natural. Where *being*, as nature or man, is seen as value-indifferent, the extreme wing of normativism strives to demonstrate that values are originally embedded in the structure of being itself—thus ontologically grounded, not variable or contingent. As we know, the mathematical-natural scientific model was already taken to be a normative paradigm. That a different conception of nature would later prevail is secondary: the effort of extreme normativism to ontologically ground values and thereby extirpate skepticism once and for all remained consistent, despite wide shifts in the concept of being. A third position, which may be called *moderate normativism*, seeks to avoid both skepticism and the severe logical difficulties faced by the extreme ontological position by drawing a

clear line between mind and sensibility, or between intelligible and sensible. Sensibility is here acknowledged as value-neutral—this concession to skepticism serves precisely to safeguard values by positing their complete independence from empirical factors. The intelligible is not a separable, graspable being and is thus indestructible. It's easy to see why this stance often drew the ire of extreme normativists. Nevertheless, after its initial formulation by Pufendorf, it found little support; even Kant's later deepening of this position only gained traction much later and in various transformed forms—perhaps because it preserved a hopeful belief in values in an era of world wars, collective disillusionment, and resignation, without demanding from exhausted minds the extremes of metaphysical faith. In any case, what matters here is that the internal logical options of modern rationalism already manifested quite clearly and early in the disputes within natural law (Grotius, Hobbes, and Pufendorf are highly typical figures). The hermeneutic fertility of this view is not diminished by the fact that, in the 18th century, dualistic or hybrid constructs became dominant—on the contrary, only this framework makes their internal logic intelligible. That these developments occurred so early is no accident: the fundamental conceptual elements of modern rationalism were already in place and could only be combined in a limited number of ways. Paradigmatic combinations are numerically finite from the outset, even if their application to individual questions can vary almost endlessly.

Mathematical natural science offered to social and moral philosophical endeavors—those subsumed under the name "natural law"—a model through which they could be systematically articulated. Above all, it provided a paradigmatic concept of nature to which new value judgments could be coherently linked. It was as if judgments and values that were formally structured similarly to the mathematical model of nature—or that could be derived *more geometrico* from a specific concept of nature—were endowed with the same binding force as a law of nature. In a time of religious and civil wars, when firm social reference points seemed to have vanished, this—harsh but all the more reassuring—binding character of natural law must have exerted a powerful fascination on the social theorist. The concept of *lex* was now transferred to social phenomena in the new meaning it had acquired in the natural sciences, although the natural sciences

themselves had originally borrowed and modified it from the political vocabulary of antiquity.[528] The curious trajectory of this concept is thus instructive for the described paradigmatic relevance of the scientific model of nature. Scholasticism too—especially in its later phase—had emphasized the absolute binding nature of certain norms, even for God himself. One might therefore conclude that modern natural law, at least formally, was indebted to Stoic ("natural system")[529] and scholastic thought. But from the broader intellectual-historical perspective, the purely scholastic influence should not be overestimated. For the developments within scholasticism occurred not least under pressure from these new, still loosely articulated currents, and some scholastics merely expressed them more clearly because they already possessed a conceptual apparatus—and, moreover, a theological alibi. They arrived at the thesis of the absolute binding force of certain fundamental truths and norms primarily in opposition to the relativist consequences of nominalism and its necessarily associated voluntarism, in which the specific content attached to empty *nomina* could only be the result of a decisionist positing. The rejection of nominalism and the doctrine of natural law are systematically connected in thinkers like Suárez—[530]that is, for him the latter was not a covert undermining of the Church's position. The same zeal drove Gabriel Vásquez to that extreme stance whose logical consequences Suárez himself sought to moderate.[531] The motivation of the scholastics thus fundamentally differs from that of the fathers of modern natural law. Moreover, the break is clearly observable in the orientation of the latter toward the mathematical-scientific model, as well as in their prioritization of anthropology, which, while not insignificant in scholastic thought, was still heavily dependent on discussions of God's nature and attributes, or was projected into those discussions—whereas it now appears as a more or less autonomous factor. At the same time, one must not overlook that

528 Casini, *Loi naturelle*, 417 ff.

529 On the meaning of the term, Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, 91.

530 On Suárez's critique of nominalism see Neidl, *Der Realitätsbegriff des F. S.*, 6 ff.; Rommen (*Staatslehre von S.*, 66 ff.) points out the limits of Suárez's critique of nominalism, which logically led him to reject the extreme position of Vásquez (see next note).

531 On Vásquez, see Welzel, *Naturrecht und materielle Gerechtigkeit*, 96 ff.

the extreme normativist wing of the newer natural law was generally willing to adopt the scholastic polemic against nominalism and voluntarism when it came to confronting value relativism and thereby shielding the new from the suspicion of nihilism. But even this appropriation was formal in character, since the struggle now took place on a contentually different, that is, secular, level.

In this nuanced perspective, the contested question of Grotius's relationship to scholasticism can, in my view, be judged without unnecessary one-sidedness.[532] It is certainly no coincidence that, among the theologians he lists as his sources, he names Francisco de Vitoria first—[533]Vitoria, as a forerunner of late Spanish scholasticism, had emphasized that God could not arbitrarily alter nature, and thus also not arbitrarily alter good and evil. On the other hand, scholasticism had become too discredited for Grotius to wish to be seen as fundamentally aligned with it (a sentence in the *Prolegomena*[534] can be read as a reproach against contemporary scholasticism, in contrast to a noncommittal praise for the older tradition). The scholastics, after all, had used their natural law doctrine as a tool in confessional conflict, thereby seriously compromising its claim to universality. Grotius, by contrast, wanted to create a natural law that would stand above all religious disputes: *"Nam id ius ita omnibus hominibus commune est, ut Religionis discrimen non admittat.*[535]*"* That is his intention when he attributes to natural law the character of a mathematical law—one that could not be changed by God and could even exist without Him.[536] Nature and immutability in the sense of

532 Catholic scholars like Rommen understandably tend to claim that Grotius essentially continues Scholasticism (*Ewige Wiederkehr des Naturrechts*, 71). Welzel, on the other hand, sees a stronger Stoic than Scholastic influence, though he does not ignore the latter (*Naturrecht und materielle Gerechtigkeit*, 128), while Wolf counters the overly "innovator-focused" view by emphasizing the traditional components and hence the "real dialectic" of old and new in Grotius (*Große Rechtsdenker*, 254 ff.).

533 *De iure*, *Prolegomena* §37 (= p. XX).

534 The last of §52 (= p. XXXI).

535 *De iure*, II, 15, 8 (= p. 418).

536 *De iure*, I, 1, 10 §5 (= p. 11); *Prolegomena* §11 (= pp. VIII f.). Röd is right to say that, despite his admiration for mathematics, Grotius was unable to construct his legal doctrine geometrically (*Geometrischer Geist und Naturrecht*, 71). What matters to us here is the structural connection between normativism

lawfulness are, for him as for the new science of nature, inseparably linked, which is why he calls his legal doctrine both *"naturalis"* and at the same time *"perpetua."*[537] The assumption of the immutability of the components of the natural order has a major anthropological consequence. If one begins with the thesis that man is by nature good or made in the image of God, then original sin can be implicitly eliminated as an illegitimate alteration of a natural constant—since neither God nor the Devil can overturn the natural order. Only constants—not distortions of natural quantities, which produce the ungovernable—enable the science of nature and, by extension, the science of society governed by natural law. Anthropology, then, becomes the most important constant of the new social theory. In Grotius, it remains optimistic: it eliminates the doctrine of original sin and assumes the natural rationality and sociability of man (*appetitus societatis*).[538] This anthropological optimism is itself made possible—or reinforced—by the rehabilitation of the senses in the sense of mathematical natural science: after the elimination of original sin, the senses are no longer merely the operational domain of the Devil. Nevertheless, the supremacy of reason must never be called into question.[539] Just as, in the realm of scientific methodology, the knowing intellect of man (who rules over nature) prevails, so too, at the level of anthropology: man is by nature good because he is capable of acting rationally—that is, of restraining his sensuality and impulses—if only he wills it. And he must will it, since the capacity is innate.

Another fundamental feature of Grotius' natural law reveals a structural similarity to the rationalist epistemology of mathematically oriented natural science: its normative character. The normativity—or untainted rationality—of his natural law is reinforced by the fact that Grotius does not undertake a systematic examination of the relationship between natural and positive law. In other words, the testimonies of socio-historical sensibility can no more shake for him the rationality = validity of natural law than instincts can undermine the rationality of man—or than vulgar experience, according to which

and the mathematical approach, regardless of execution—which in any case was more a matter of form, albeit symbolically powerful.

537 *De iure*, *Prolegomena* §31 (= p. XVIII).

538 *De iure*, *Prolegomena* §6 (= p. V).

539 *De iure*, I, 2, 1–2; *Prolegomena* §§9, 13 (= pp. 25 f., VII f., X).

the sun revolves around the earth, can refute the conclusions of mathematically conducted natural science. Grotius does indeed appeal to history and wants to discover in it not only examples but also normative theses (*judicia*).[540] Yet this turn to history considers experience in the same way as Galileo's thought experiments did. It is not experience, but the intellect, that is authoritative—and yet the world of experience is the field of activity for the new intellect, as opposed to the old. Thus the appeal to history or socio-historical sensibility is of a worldview-polemical nature and reflects the new spirit's break with the old framework—a break made possible precisely by the rehabilitation of sensibility. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the first reproach Grotius levels against the theological natural law theorists is none other than their neglect of history, even as he understands the mathematical method as an abstraction from matter and wants to model his natural law accordingly.[541] He is in no way willing to let the normative and unchangeable character of his natural law be influenced by the fluctuations of history. On the contrary: the norm is to guide the interpretation of the factual. Psychologically revealing is a formulation[542] in which Grotius questions reality from the perspective of the norm and imperceptibly shifts levels: that war suspends law is said to be untrue, because war ought to be waged only for the realization of law. The *verum* and the *debere* are simply treated as synonymous.

Through Hobbes, modern natural law theory very early lost its normativist virginity. His approach rests on a completely different conception of the rehabilitation of sensibility, and therefore also on a different anthropology, which corresponds to an equally different stance on the question of norms. Whereas for Grotius the rehabilitation of the sensible world—that is, of the earthly realm as the main focus of human theoretical and practical effort—did not endanger the primacy of reason as the carrier of the normative *par excellence*, for Hobbes the normative, at least in Grotius' sense, must fall away. This is because for Hobbes human behavior in general, and social or political life in particular, does not rest on reason, but on drives and natural needs.

540 *De iure*, *Prolegomena* §46 (= p. XXIX).

541 *De iure*, *Prolegomena* §§38 and 58 (= pp. XX, XXXIII). See also n. 473.

542 *De iure*, *Prolegomena* §25, beginning (= p. XV).

Grotius had strictly separated sociability from utility;[543] Hobbes, by contrast, most emphatically links state power or obedience with the protection of the subjects.[544] It is utility and the satisfaction of needs—not a society-loving reason independent of them—that establishes larger societies, and precisely for this reason such societies are unthinkable without state power. Hobbes turns simultaneously against the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition and the newer normativism when he denies man's natural sociability[545] and describes the state of nature (by which he does not mean merely the condition prior to organized societies, but rather the condition corresponding to human nature *as such*) as the war of all against all.[546] The drive for self-preservation, which he calls a "necessity of nature,[547]" is for Hobbes—directly opposed to the Stoic-inspired normativists—only secondarily and by a detour connected to sociability; primarily and essentially, it refers to the striving for the expansion of one's own power, since only the expansion of power can ensure long-term self-preservation in a world of ceaseless struggle.[548] Human reason in general is entangled with this sometimes ambivalent but unified striving for power on the one hand, and security on the other, in all its manifestations, even the highest.[549] Thus, the normative has no independent locus within man.

A brief analysis of Hobbes' concept of reason can provide insight into key aspects of his thought, which are directly relevant to our investigation. How is it to be explained, first of all, that Hobbes calls the "laws of nature"—that is, those obligations whose fulfillment first makes social life possible—[550]"dictates" or "precepts of reason" (sometimes even "right" or "natural reason"),[551] while at the same time emphatically denying the existence of a "recta ratio" anchored in

543 *De iure*, *Prolegomena* §§16, 22 (= pp. XI, XIII).
544 *Leviathan* XXII (= *EW* III, 208); XVII (= *EW* III, 153).
545 *De Cive* I, §2 (= *OL* II, 158 ff.).
546 *De Cive* I, §10 (= *OL* II, 164 f.); *Leviathan* XIII (= *EW* III, 113).
547 *Elements of Law* I, 14, 6 (= p. 54).
548 *Leviathan* XI (= *EW* III, 85 f.); XIII (= *EW* III, 111 f.).
549 Even knowledge, alongside wealth and fame, is a form of power; see *Leviathan* VIII (= *EW* III, 61).
550 *Leviathan* XIV (= *EW* III, 117).
551 *Leviathan* XIV (= *EW* III, 116), XV (= *EW* III, 147), XLII (= *EW* III, 513); *De Cive* I, §15 (= *EW* II, 13), II, §1 (= *EW* II, 16), etc. etc.

rerum natura itself?[552] This is only possible because Hobbes has two fundamentally different conceptions of reason in mind—or more precisely: because he opposes the traditional conception of reason with a radically new one, demanded by his purely naturalistic anthropology. When he does not accept reason in the sense of an "infallible faculty," he is thereby calling into question precisely that which, in the classical philosophical tradition, served as the basis for its infallibility—namely, its binding to and constant reference to eternal, ontologically grounded norms. By contrast, human reason in Hobbes is rooted in the drive for self-preservation, specifically in the fear of violent death, which restrains the thirst for power, since ultimately anyone can kill anyone.[553] This basis of reason is exceedingly narrow by normativist standards—but for Hobbes it is deeply embedded in the biological constitution of man. Not abstract morality, but concrete existential fear is what drives people to end the war of all against all and to obey the natural laws as precepts of reason. Only by way of fear-reason does the drive for self-preservation lead to sociability, and this derivative character makes sociability itself so fragile: not only is it often disrupted by civil war (since between states the state of nature never ends),[554] but the war also lasts much longer than mere hostilities —namely, as long as the *intention* for war persists.[555] Because reason is primarily a function of the self-preservation drive, it exists even in the state of nature (which is why its first "general rule" contains both "the fundamental law of nature" and "the sum of the right of nature")[556]. It is therefore not always and not necessarily bound to the concepts of good and evil, which do not exist at all in the state of nature;[557] and when it does bind itself to these concepts after the founding of society, it does so for exactly the same reason that precluded such binding in the state of nature—[558]namely, because it is now the better strategy for securing self-preservation. Thus, purposive rationality becomes the

552 *Elements of Law* II, 10, 8 (= p. 150); *De Cive* I §1 (= *EW* II, 16).
553 See the fine analysis by Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 17 ff.
554 *Leviathan* XXX (= *EW* III, 342); XIII (= *EW* III, 115).
555 *Leviathan* XIII (= *EW* III, 113).
556 *Leviathan* XIV (= *EW* III, 117).
557 *Leviathan* XIII (= *EW* III, 115).
558 *Leviathan* XV (= *EW* III, 133 f.).

highest virtue of sound reason,[559] and this is hardly altered by its later association with good and evil, since even this is viewed largely through the lens of utility.

It is easy to see that this revolutionary reversal of the normativist concept of reason rooted in the Greco-Christian tradition is linked to the modern thesis that man is nature—and thus it appears in outline long before Hobbes (in Machiavelli it is even tacitly presupposed). The consequences of separating reason from ontologically grounded normativity are, however, immense for modern rationalism, such that one could say it lives in the shadow of that separation. The direct dependence of reason on the existential conditions of the sensuous, finite, thoroughly natural human being forbids it from prescribing eternal norms and channels its activity into weighing up the respective possibilities of avoiding violent death and, beyond that, satisfying power needs. Since these possibilities depend on highly variable factors—on place and time—one cannot derive from the mere fact that reason is at work any necessary conclusion as to what it will command in each case. Reason is indeed eternal insofar as the drive for self-preservation never rests, but no substantive constancy of norms can be derived from this. In other words: that there *should* be norms is a demand of reason—or of the self-preservation drive—which compels the establishment of societies; but what these norms should actually prescribe remains initially open and is the product of a *positing* by a sovereign will. This fundamental distinction between *that* and *what*—a specific symptom of the aforementioned severance of reason from normativity in the traditional sense—highlights the point where nominalism and voluntarism cross paths again, this time not in a theological context (as with Ockham), but in a purely secular one. The link between naturalistic anthropology, skepticism (or nominalism-voluntarism), and modern statehood or the doctrine of sovereignty—which we encountered de facto in Machiavelli—emerges in Hobbes in fully theorized form.

The precise formulation of this intellectual constellation by Hobbes is evident in his reflections on *natural law*, which themselves rest on the distinction between law in general—as a command of reason or the instinct of self-preservation—and *positive law* as the product of a sovereign decree; i.e., on the distinction between *that* (daß)

559 *Elements of Law* I, 15, 1 (= pp. 15 f.).

and *what* (was). Hobbes emphasizes that his theory of *natural law* does not concern actual laws but rather their general character.[560] The *natural laws* are initially contentless, mere *theoremata*, which do not yet deserve the name *lex* in the strict sense of a "*vox imperantis.*[561]" Because of this indeterminacy, the question of interpretation arises acutely—namely, the sovereign is he who can authoritatively interpret.[562] And when Hobbes writes that the natural laws are eternal and unchangeable, he immediately adds that they are merely *animi dispositiones* (i.e., ultimately the instinct for self-preservation, which compels the establishment of society and law in general), which differ fundamentally from the *actiones*—those concrete acts governed by the actual law—in that the latter must be shaped according to circumstances, such that what is right and reasonable at one time may be unlawful and irrational at another.[563] All injustice is indeed prohibited by natural law, but what (*quid*) is to count as injustice is not determined by natural but by civil law.[564] There were even times, Hobbes notes, when robbery was reconcilable with natural law.[565] In such remarks emerges the historically grounded value relativism which, in conjunction with naturalistic anthropology, sustains the skeptical position. Just as in Montaigne, Hobbes states that nothing is absolutely good;[566] the concepts of good and evil always apply in relation to a particular person, not *per se*.[567] What they should mean in content is defined by the will of the sovereign:[568] it is for him to decide *what* they shall be, while the *fact* that they exist—and therefore that there are laws and peace—is his duty. The distinction between *that* and *what* thus characterizes the very genesis of the *Leviathan* and, by extension, the nature of the sovereignty that arises from it. People agree only that a state should be established, and they entrust the

560 „ne quae sint, sed quid sint leges", *De Cive*, Praefatio ad Lectores = *OL* II, 152.
561 *Leviathan* XV (*OL* III, 122).
562 *Leviathan* XXVI (= *OL* III, 202).
563 *De Cive* III §29 (= *OL* II, 195 f.).
564 *De Cive* VI §16 (= *OL* II, 229).
565 *Elements of Law*, I, 19, 2 (= p. 78).
566 *Elements of Law*, I, 7, 3 (= p. 22).
567 *Leviathan* VI (= *EW* III, 41).
568 *De Cive* VI, §9 (= *OL* II, 221 f.).

future sovereign with this task—without retaining any influence over what laws he will issue in order to fulfill the purpose of the state's foundation.[569]

As is well known, Hobbes does not see these competencies of the sovereign as the beginning of tyranny, but rather as the only viable chance for social peace. What interests us here is not so much the theory of sovereignty itself, but the question of norms and the closely tied reversal of the traditional concept of reason. The sovereign's competence in determining good and evil is inseparable from Hobbes' redefinition of reason. In order for reason to dictate what is best in avoiding a relapse into the state of nature, it must proceed instrumentally—according to the needs of the concrete situation—and thus be free from normativist constraints. Reason, in this sense, is value- and norm-neutral: it is willing to sacrifice all norms and values on the altar of peace preservation. By contrast, normativist reason is defined by its inner drive to correct or eliminate what it judges as "false" convictions—an attitude that, ultimately, leads to war. Hobbes was the first in modernity to recognize the immense latent aggressiveness of the normative and moralistic, and he saw in its neutralization a key instrument for securing peace. The notion that a supposedly single, true reason might prescribe supposedly uniquely just laws is, for him, "an error that hath cost many thousands of men their lives.[570]" The claim to possess the one true reason is, in his view, merely a disguised claim to power.[571] Thus, Hobbes launches his attack not only against theological tradition but also against the new, anti-absolutist, and classicist-inspired normativism,[572] which—like theology—can cause equal unrest.[573] That Hobbes' arguments could be deployed both against the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition and against a major wing of modern rationalism is emblematic of the realignment

569 *De Cive* II, §4; VI, §14; VII, §12 (= *OL* II, 170 f., 227, 242).

570 *The Questions Concerning Liberty*, etc. = *EW* V, 176.

571 *Leviathan* V (= *EW* III, 31).

572 *Leviathan* XXIX (= *EW* III, 314 f.).

573 In an important book heavily influenced by Hobbes, Koselleck has shown that Enlightenment normativism, in its struggle against the absolutist state, gave rise to a permanent state of crisis comparable to the era of religious wars (*Kritik und Krise*, esp. 151 ff.). The brief but precise interpretation of Hobbes (pp. 18 ff.) is also undertaken from the perspective of civil war dynamics.

of alliances provoked by the specter of nihilism.

If one understands Hobbes' theory of *natural law* or *obligation* in this context—as one must—then the assumption that it could be captured within the framework of normativist natural law appears utterly misguided.[574] This must be made clear if we are even to be capable of locating the normative component in Hobbes' thought where it actually exists. For paradoxically, such a normative component does exist and, given Hobbes' fundamental stance toward the question of norms, it introduces considerable logical difficulties; it also has serious implications for the structure of his political theory. This normative component lies in the (by no means self-evident) thesis —which could just as well be taken as a hope or a wish—that *social peace ought to prevail*. Hobbes does not want to remain a skeptical observer of human affairs (though in a certain respect he is one); rather, he wants to create a science that eliminates false opinions and proves its practical utility through its impact in strengthening peace.[575]

574 The most detailed proponent of this thesis has been Warrender (*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, esp. Chapters V–VII, pp. 80 ff.).
The best critique of this thesis so far has been formulated by Polin (*L'Obligation Morale et Politique*, pp. 139 ff., especially notes 18 and 61); cf. the remarks of Watkins, *Hobbes' System of Ideas*, pp. 85 ff., 154 ff.
Following Warrender, Hood even concludes that Hobbes' morality was "traditional and Christian" (*The Divine Politics of Hobbes*, p. 13; for Polin's critique see *L'Obligation*, notes 4 and 28). Characteristically, Hood hardly bothers to explain how Hobbes' materialist ontology and anthropology could be reconciled with his alleged Christian faith. He simply asserts that Hobbes viewed his mechanism as an explication of a religious worldview (p. 14), ignoring the fact that Hobbes, through his theory of motion, directly questioned the Christian conception of God (cf. above, note 293).
Theologians have a sharper instinct for Hobbes' actual religious convictions, as shown by Braun's book. Setting aside its polemical tone, Braun's thesis that Hobbes was an atheist (*Der sterbliche Gott*, pp. 37 ff.) is argued more thoroughly and psychologically convincingly than Hood's.
Furthermore, Braun, unlike Hood, considers the significance of Hobbes' materialist ontology for his political and moral philosophy (pp. 70 ff.).
Very questionable, however, is Braun's charge that Hobbes envisioned a form of totalitarianism (esp. pp. 160 ff.). On this, see also the Hobbes analysis by Koselleck cited in the previous note.
575 A typical formulation of Hobbes' aims can be found in *Elements of Law*, Epistle Dedicatory, pp. xvii ff.

As an advocate of the norm of social peace, Hobbes—like any other normativist—must appeal to human insight and try to win people over. But this is where his logical difficulties begin, for his reversal of the traditional concept of reason has made the existence of a purely normatively oriented *insight* in man highly questionable. If human reason can be brought to understand the truth of sound political maxims, then one must ask why it should be impossible to ground social obligations from the outset on a purely rational basis, clearly and bindingly. Hobbes knows, however, that the state—even considered as a god on earth—[576]is still mortal, since it rests on a drive for self-preservation that oscillates between fear of death and the thirst for power. That thesis would suffice as an interpretation if Hobbes merely aimed to make the rise and fall of states comprehensible to the dispassionate observer. But one who posits social peace as a value *in itself*, as something that *ought to be*, like Hobbes (in contrast to Machiavelli),[577] must be able to derive permanent duties from the drive for self-preservation—precisely to demonstrate the realizability and thus the seriousness of this normative claim. In attempting to do so, Hobbes gives only the most superficial consideration to the critical case in which the immediate interest of self-preservation demands the violation of obligations, provided that no sanctions are to be feared (this possibility, incidentally, is already suggested by the ambivalent formulation of the definition of the first fundamental "rule of reason,[578]" which applies to both *law* and *right* of nature, although the latter is supposed to mean liberty, and the former obligation). Hobbes wants to derive from the general usefulness of society for the individual the necessity of submission to social norms in every individual case: this is legitimate, but it once again amounts to an appeal to a reason that transcends the immediate needs of self-preservation. On the basis of his anthropological assumptions and his concept of reason, Hobbes cannot derive any *permanent* obligations or behavioral norms.[579] The permanent preservation of peace would

576 *Leviathan* XVII (= *EW* III, 158).

577 Machiavelli had famously located the essential cause of Roman liberty and power in the ongoing conflict between the people and the aristocracy, *Discorsi* I, 4 and 6 (= *Opere* 101 f., 105 ff.).

578 *Leviathan* XIX (= *EW*, III, 177).

579 On this, see the remarks of Röd, *Geometrischer Geist und Naturrecht*, pp. 28

theoretically be possible only if human beings were rational in the normativist sense, or if the drive for self-preservation consisted solely in fear of death—i.e., had nothing to do with, and was never allied to, the striving for power. But then again, what is the point of fear, if there were no power-hungry enemy?

Hobbes nonetheless attempted to deduce the *ought* or the value of peace in such a way as if the drive for self-preservation consisted solely in fear—and not also in a striving for power, which can at times be even stronger than fear. Precisely in order to make the binding force of this "ought" comprehensible, he employed the geometrical mode of construction: this relates, at least within his social theory, exclusively to the normative component of his thinking. Under the influence of triumphant mathematical physics, Hobbes believed that his normative claims would be more theoretically compelling and practically effective if they could be deduced within a geometrically structured framework. But this assumption—that the geometrically structured and proven carries greater persuasive power—presupposes a belief in purely intellectual motivation. And since the geometrical method is being used to deduce an "ought," its use in Hobbes takes on the same intellectualist-normativist coloring as in Grotius. This confirms our general thesis that it is intellectualist normativists who appeal to the mathematical evidence of natural law—even though this is only one aspect (and not the most important one) of Hobbes' overall thought, which, due to its fundamental value relativism, stands in contradiction to it. In other words: unlike Grotius, Hobbes' use of the geometric method for normative ends scarcely aligns with the anthropological and philosophical (nominalist and voluntarist) foundations of his thinking. As a geometer—or, through a mathematically constructed political theory—Hobbes seeks to direct nature and the natural human being. But as an anthropologist, he insists that man *is* nature, that he cannot (or can only temporarily) overcome his sensuality, his drives, and his passions. Materialism and political aspiration come into conflict.[580] Hobbes, by the way, indirectly acknowledges the ambiguity

f., 36 f., 51 f.; also Ilting, *Einleitung zu Tönnies*, 67* ff., esp. 74*. With good reason, Ilting concludes from this the untenability of the "natural law" interpretation of Hobbes (77*).

580 Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 168 f. Cf. however below note 519.

of his position when he says that humans bear responsibility for the dissolution of the state not as its "matter," but as its "makers.[581]" The *matter* is and remains nature; the *maker* overcomes it—ultimately, Hobbes implies, with the help of a geometrically constructed political theory. This purely normative function of the geometric method, in connection with the idea of man as *maker*, becomes clearer when we recall that the decisive aspect of Hobbes' anthropology—viewing man as nature or *matter*—was already in place *before* his engagement with mathematical natural science, having developed in the context of humanist and historical studies.[582] This is an intellectually important

581 *Leviathan* XXIX (= *EW*, III, 308); elsewhere Hobbes writes that we can construct politics *a priori* because we make it (*De homine* X, 5 = *OL* II, 94).

582 This was convincingly shown by Strauss (*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, XV, 6 ff., 170). However, his attempt (pp. 8 ff.) to link Hobbes' mechanistic materialism as a scientist with his "naturalistic" (= pessimistic) anthropology is problematic. He claims Hobbes' "vitalist" conception of man stems from humanist tradition and is thus more flexible or optimistic. We have instead shown that Hobbes' use of the geometric method—structurally aligned with his mechanistic approach—serves a normative purpose, independently of whether mechanistic determinism ontologically underpins Hobbes' pessimistic anthropology and thereby also undermines the normative ideal he aims for (on this point, Strauss is right; cf. above note 517), namely by de facto excluding reason.

(That the adoption of scientific method per se might impair Hobbes' political philosophy, as Strauss suggests, is also doubted by Röd with good reasons, *Geometrischer Geist und Naturrecht*, 20.)

Strauss commits this error because he too readily identifies Hobbes' humanist leanings with a content-based or normativist orientation toward Aristotle (p. 108), even though Hobbes merely utilized Aristotelian materials (see the textual comparison in Strauss, pp. 35 ff.), but framed them within a completely different structure.

In other words, Strauss commits the same error he rightly attributes to Dilthey in regard to Hobbes' use of Stoic concepts (pp. 3 f.). That Hobbes was inspired in his "naturalist" anthropology not least by *humanist* tradition could be demonstrated through a detailed comparison with Thucydides—unfortunately absent from Strauss (cf. pp. 109 f.).

(To my knowledge, this significant gap in research remains unfilled; Schlatter's study, *Hobbes and Thucydides*, remains philologically oriented—though it contains valuable insights, esp. p. 357.)

A precise investigation of Hobbes' relationship to Thucydides and to the emerging science of *mores* (= moralists; see above note 374) would greatly help

point, especially when we consider the role history played for thinkers like Machiavelli or Montaigne—in contrast to the irrelevance of mathematics and physics. Hobbes could just as well have remained within a historical framework, without needing to change his basic views on man and state in the slightest—had he not wanted to *formulate and defend a norm*. That is what led to his (later) introduction of the geometric method into political theory—and conversely, to his denigration of history.[583]

In terms of content, the influence of the geometrical method—used with normative intent—reveals itself in the consistent construction of the *fiction*[584] of the state of nature and the accompanying theory of contract. Based on his anthropology and his knowledge of history alone, Hobbes could certainly have maintained that human nature cannot be restrained without authority, and thus that no organized society can come into being. But he only introduces the contract theory because he wishes to present the origin of sovereignty in such a way that its *binding force* (not least in a normative sense) appears just as compelling as the necessity of a geometrically proven natural law. It is precisely with regard to this normative aspect of the contract theory that he places the *Commonwealth by institution* at the center of his account—even though he himself emphasizes that the

uncover the intellectual lineage of Hobbes' anthropology, and would also directly refute the vulgar Marxist (if liberal-coded) reading by Macpherson. Macpherson's attempt (*Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, esp. 61 ff.) to derive Hobbes' anthropology from the antagonisms of early capitalist society is ideologically driven, aiming to deflect from the claim of an inherently evil human nature that would render liberal, normativist notions of social progress unviable.

The historicization or relativization of Hobbes—like that of Machiavelli—is thus often ideologically motivated. But it does not provide an answer to the political-theoretical questions Hobbes posed when he linked human nature and sovereignty in the same breath as protection and obedience.

By not mentioning Thucydides once, Macpherson conveniently avoids the awkward question of how it was possible for an anthropology, supposedly reflecting early capitalism, to be formulated centuries before that era, and in nearly identical terms.

583 The references in Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 96 ff.

584 Hobbes himself notes that the state of nature was not always a war of all against all, but calls on the reader to imagine a condition in which no higher authority exists to restrain men (*Leviathan* XIII = *EW*, III, 144 f.).

sovereign in a *Commonwealth by acquisition* possesses exactly the same rights as one instituted by contract.[585] The comparison with Machiavelli is again instructive. Machiavelli directs his attention primarily to dominion gained through force and virtue.[586] In contrast to the historically-minded Machiavelli, however, Hobbes aims with his political theory to promote a specific normative goal. This explains his preference for contract theory; it is a particular consequence of his broader appropriation of the geometrical method, which generates a pervasive ambiguity in Hobbes' political thought when considered in its totality. For our thesis about the *structural parallelism* across the various layers of an extensive intellectual edifice, it is noteworthy that the same ambiguity—this time produced by the sensualist point of departure on the one hand, and by the simultaneous construction of a comprehensive physical worldview using purely logical-mathematical procedures on the other—also characterizes Hobbes' epistemology.[587]

Hobbes' normative zeal was indeed strong enough to make the logical coherence of his political theory questionable—yet it was not strong enough to overshadow the dominant value-relativist, nominalist, and voluntarist aspects of his thinking. Most telling in this regard is the link—sharply criticized by Leibniz—[588]between Hobbes' decisionism in defining words and his decisionism in defining values and truths. It has been aptly noted that the natural law doctrines of Grotius and Hobbes represent two fundamentally different types of social science.[589] The opposition between them is irreconcilable, both in content and form—ontological-anthropological on the one hand, epistemological on the other. If carried through consistently, the tendency represented by Hobbes had to culminate in a descriptive-relativistic theory of society. Grotius, by contrast, emphasized the prescriptive dimension so strongly that—if preserved in its purity—it risked a suppression of historical reality, thus potentially leading to a

585 *Leviathan* XX (= *EW*, III, 185 f.).

586 *Principe* VI (= *Opere* 21 ff.).

587 See the excellent analysis by Polin, *Politique et philosophie chez Hobbes*, chap. II, esp. 47 ff. One can probably consider Polin's book the most comprehensive interpretation of Hobbes' thought to date.

588 See the text *Marii Nizolii de veris Principiis etc.* from 1670, in: *Philosophische Schriften* IV, 158.

589 Welzel, *Naturrecht und materielle Gerechtigkeit*, 146.

relapse into the ahistorical normativism of scholasticism. This, in turn, would endanger the very *primacy of anthropology*, which was one of the essential achievements of early modern rationalism. The task thus arose to preserve the rehabilitation of socio-historical *sensuality*—closely tied to the primacy of anthropology—*while at the same time* grounding norms in an unambiguous way in order to neutralize the charge of nihilism.

There is reason to believe that Pufendorf largely grasped the theoretical dilemma into which early modern rationalism—particularly in its natural law form—had fallen, due to the diametrically opposed approaches of Hobbes and Grotius, and that he conceived his own work as a way out of it. Already in his first publication, this programmatic tone is strong; he names Grotius and Hobbes as his most important sources, but at the same time emphasizes his distance from both with regard to the demands of truth.[590] Pufendorf thus recognizes that mere conciliatory eclecticism will not suffice; what is needed is a new beginning based on clear decisions—not just juridical, but philosophical and anthropological. It speaks to his grasp of essentials that he opens all his major works with a declaration of such decisions, the most important of which concerns the freedom of the will. On this point, he cites Grotius approvingly[591] and polemicizes against Hobbes.[592] He does not attempt to downplay or conceal the influence of sensuality in its many forms (climate, soil, biological constitution and the resulting passions) on the will and actions of individuals and peoples—on the contrary, he discusses them at length. Nevertheless, he believes that although man harbors an inclination toward evil, he can overcome all this by virtue of his rational faculty.[593] The mind must rule over the body; but from this, asceticism must not follow, for the body is the indispensable vehicle of the spirit and must be attentively cared for as such. Pufendorf is no naïve idealist. Precisely because he clearly understands the skeptical and relativist consequences of the rehabilitation of sensuality, he

590 *Elementorum*, *Praefatio*, penultimate and last pages (the preface pages are unnumbered).

591 *Jus naturae* I, 4 § III (= I, 55).

592 *Jus naturae* I, 4 § II (= I, 54).

593 *De officio* I, I, § 12 (= pp. 5 f.); § 14 (= p. 6); *Jus naturae* I, 4, §§ V–VII (= I, 57 ff.).

believes that if freedom and morality are to have any chance at all, they must rest on an autonomous, purely spiritual seat within man.[594] The (free) will, therefore, is not merely a drive but is intertwined with reason—indeed, it follows reason,[595] since it implies a choice that can only be made through rational insight.[596] In light of the sovereignty of the intellect, Pufendorf also assigns the psychic or instinctual elements in general to the physical, not to the moral realm.[597] With classical simplicity, he states the reason for insisting so carefully on securing freedom of the will: without it, talk of morality is meaningless.[598] We must assume an *intellectus rectus*, "nisi omnem actionum moralitatem velimus evenire.[599]" But even jurisprudence in the narrower sense cannot dispense with freedom of the will, since without it there is no accountability[600] and no obligation: only *voluntas libera* is *obligationis capax*.[601]

The elevation of man above blind nature—understandably reflected in the frequent emphasis on the differences between humans and animals—[602]is, as is well known, supported by Pufendorf's famous distinction between *entia moralia* and *entia physica*. This distinction is already clearly implied[603] in his first work and dominates the entire first book of his main treatise. In itself, it testifies to the impossibility of a direct reconciliation between Hobbes and Grotius; in other words, the proposed solution does not lie in the fusion of causal and normative, or of being and ought, but precisely in their

594 *De officio* I, V, §§ 2–3 (= p. 31).
595 *Jus naturae* I, 3 § I (= I, 39).
596 *Jus naturae* I, 4 § III (= I, 54); in this passage Pufendorf polemicizes against Hobbes' concept of a drive-driven will.
597 Welzel, *Die Naturrechtslehre Pufendorfs*, 21, 25.
598 *Jus naturae* I, 4 § III (= I, 54): *quod ista sublata actionum humanarum moralitas funditus simul tollatur* ("if these [faculties] are removed, the morality of human actions collapses entirely").
599 *Jus naturae* I, 3 § III (= I, 40).
600 *De officio* I, I § 10 (= p. 4).
601 *Elementorum* II, Axiom. II, Obs. 2 § 9 (= p. 271); *Jus naturae* I, 6 § VIII (= I, 94).
602 *Jus naturae* I, 3 § I; II, 1 §§ IV–VII (= I, 38 f., 143 ff.); *De officio* I, I § 3–9 (= pp. 1 ff.).
603 *Elementorum* I, Def. I §§ 1–3 (= pp. 1 ff.): distinction between the material and the formal ("fundamental") in a *actio moralis*.

fundamental separation. What is crucial here is that Pufendorf does not wish to hypostatize the normative, nor to locate it in the "nature of things." The *entia moralia* are not substances, but *modi*—modes that are ascribed to physical things by intelligent beings.[604] Precisely for this reason, the (morally free) action remains unified, even though two fundamentally different aspects—namely the indispensable physical component and the guiding intellectual component—can be distinguished within it. This distinction is, therefore, logical in the strict sense.[605] It must be so if it is to fulfill its polemical functions.[606] For Pufendorf believes that the pure intelligibility of the moral can overcome not only materialism, but also the scholastic doctrine of the *perseitas* (inherent being) of moral things. In his prolonged conflict with the Protestant followers of late Spanish scholasticism, Pufendorf—aiming toward this goal—appropriated the voluntarist conception of God, and it is characteristic of the shifting intellectual constellation that in doing so, he had to distance himself clearly from Grotius,[607] to whom the scholastics were now appealing. At the same time, he did not wish to extend voluntarism and nominalism fully to the human level; against Hobbes he argues that the *bonum naturale* does not simply depend on human opinions.[608] Since it cannot, on the other hand, be hypostatized, it is binding ultimately because it represents a command or decision of God.[609] Thus, divine voluntarism imposes limits upon the human sphere. What began as a rejection of scholastic

604 *Jus naturae* I, 1, § III (= I, 5): *rebus aut motibus physicis superadditi ab entibus intelligentibus* (cf. I, 1 § VI = I, 7).
605 *Jus naturae* I, 5, § II (= I, 67 f.).
606 It's unclear how Wolf (*Große Rechtsdenker*, 339) can claim that Pufendorf fails to reach Kant's concept of ethical freedom simply because for him everything spiritual remains attached to the sensible-corporeal. But even Kant does not hypostasize the moral, nor does he deny that moral action must also have a physical aspect. Another supposed major difference between Pufendorf and Kant, according to Wolf, is that for the former a being's essence must correspond to the fulfillment of the *ought*. But even for Kant, in this sense, a link between being and ought is self-evident: only *entia intelligentia* can act morally—animals cannot. The capacity for this must be embedded in the structure of reason itself.
607 *Jus naturae* II, 3 § IV (= I, 179 f.); also the next paragraph.
608 *Jus naturae* I, 4 § IV (= I, 56).
609 *Jus naturae* II, 3 § XXI (= I, 216).

perseitas ends in a reconciliation with the Lutheran doctrine of God's will—even though Pufendorf cannot endorse the Lutheran doctrine of the human will. At its core, this is an awkward compromise that reveals an inner logical tension in Pufendorf's framework,[610] though it must also be seen as entirely sensible if one considers the concrete, varied polemical targets of his project.

This logical tension ultimately stems from the fact that the distinction between *entia moralia* and *entia physica*—as logically unassailable as it may be in purely abstract terms—inevitably encounters difficulties in its concrete application. For how can a concept of natural law be founded on a value-neutral, if not outright value-hostile, notion of nature? If the separation of nature and morality were valid in all cases and across the board, it would have to be conceivable not only to eliminate the concept of natural law entirely, but even to justify a law *against* nature. Divine commands and interventions appear as saviors in distress only when moral norms are not ontologically given or embedded in nature itself. This was an unavoidable position in the struggle against scholasticism—but one that could not refute Hobbes, unless approached from a narrow standpoint of Christian piety, which Pufendorf clearly does not adopt. Therefore, he must redefine the concept of natural law. In accordance with his fundamental distinction between *entia moralia* and *entia physica*, he thus posits alongside the empirical concept of nature an intelligible one, which is to serve as the repository and source of likewise intelligible norms of natural law. At the same time, however, he strives to revise the empirical concept of nature in such a way that it does not make the formulation of norms impossible from the outset—though this empirical concept is to remain distinct from the intelligible one. In attempting to render the empirical concept of nature normatively pliable, Pufendorf unintentionally and indirectly admits—albeit clearly—that the intelligible cannot assert itself entirely independently of empirical reality, or of any conception of nature and anthropology. Rather, it requires support from the empirically ascertainable "nature of things." This is the main source of the aforementioned difficulty in applying the distinction between *entia moralia* and *entia physica*: it itself presupposes certain prior decisions—especially since the distinction is already based on a decision.

610 Cf. Welzel, *Naturrechtslehre Pufendorfs*, 43 n. 40; 52 n. 6.

Pufendorf's somewhat acrobatic strategy of simultaneously securing the intelligible and adequately addressing the empirical can be traced in his anthropological remarks. That he is firmly grounded in modernity—despite polemically motivated appeals to divine will and command—is shown by his oft-repeated assertion that only the knowledge of the constitution of human nature can pave the way for an investigation of natural law.[611] Given the primacy of anthropology, the task becomes to secure the intelligible within human nature and thereby make it the foundation of natural law. As for the necessary faculties for this, Pufendorf—as we know—points to freedom of the will and the intellect's power over the sensory realm. Substantively, however, he proceeds by equating the intelligible nature of man with the totality of moral-social behaviors, without elevating the content of a universal human drive to the level of a norm—as Grotius did with the drive for sociability, and, on the other end, Hobbes with the drive for self-preservation.[612] Nevertheless, Pufendorf is far from indifferent to the character of universal human drives. On the contrary, he seeks to make corrections (primarily to Hobbes) that allow room for the intelligible nature of man. Some retractions become inevitable in this process. Pufendorf believes in the elemental power of the self-preservation instinct no less than Hobbes—an instinct that rules over both man and beast—[613]and at times he even describes self-love in a way reminiscent of La Rochefoucauld or Nietzsche, seeing it at work even behind seemingly most selfless actions.[614] Yet it is telling that Pufendorf, immediately following such passages, emphasizes in contrast to Hobbes that human sociation arises not from fear of death as an offshoot of self-preservation, but from a distinctive feature of human character itself.[615] A war of all against all is unthinkable among

611 *Jus naturae* II, 3 § XIV (= I, 200); *De officio* I, III, § 1 (= p. 18).
612 Phrase from Welzel, *Naturrechtslehre Pufendorfs*, 42. On the connection between law (norm) and (intelligible) human nature in Pufendorf, see also Denzer, *Moralphilosophie und Naturrecht bei Pufendorf*, 83 ff.
613 *Jus naturae* II, 3 § XIV (= I, 200).
614 *Elementorum* II, Axiom. II, Obs. 3 § 1 (= pp. 273 f.).
615 *Elementorum* II, Axiom. II, Obs. 3 § 5 (= pp. 277 f.); *Jus naturae* II, 3 § XVI (= I, 205 ff.).

humans,[616] he claims—it is the animal condition *par excellence*.[617] Hobbes' account of the origins and function of society and the state thus collapses. Pufendorf also refuses to recognize the *imbecillitas*, i.e., the biologically rooted helplessness of man[618] (which he himself impressively describes), as a valid reason for sociation. All this serves to detach the concept of sociability from the physical-sensory realm and to connect it directly to man's intelligible-moral nature, thus making it a normative instance. In the end, it is the idea of human dignity that sustains the concept of sociability and gives it its proper content.[619] But since this sociability is also treated as an observable fact —and used as such, for example, in opposition to Hobbes—it follows that in Pufendorf's theory of sociability, causal natural law and ethical postulate, sociological fact and logical principle, become entwined.[620] This shows how Pufendorf's handling of the empirical, undertaken to secure the intelligible, ultimately results in the very entanglement of *Sein* and *Sollen* (being and ought) that he had hoped to eliminate through the fundamental distinction between *entia physica* and *entia moralia*. The principled and open dualism thus often turns into a dualism of embarrassed wavering. This becomes evident in his treatment of concrete issues. He says, for example, that the natural drive for sociability in humans could have been satisfied within small communities, and thus cannot in itself explain the emergence of the state—which exists to restrain dangerous human desires.[621] But Pufendorf carefully avoids the obvious implications of this thesis by, in turn, defining the state itself—drawing again on the distinction between *entia physica* and *entia moralia*—as a *persona moralis*.[622] Sovereignty arises from and rests on *consensus*,[623] and yet remains sovereign. Regarding the citizen, the dualism emerges in the idea that

616 *Jus naturae* I, 1 § VIII (= I, 10); II, 2 § VIII (= I, 166 f.), directly against Hobbes.

617 *Elementorum* II, Axiom. II, Obs. 3 § 6 (= p. 279): *ipsissima bestiarum vita*.

618 *Jus naturae* II, 1 § VIII (= I, 148 f.); *Elementorum* II, Axiom. II, Obs. 3 § 2 (= pp. 274 f.); *De officio* I, III, §§ 3–7 (= pp. 19 ff.).

619 Welzel, *Naturrecht und materielle Gerechtigkeit*, 156.

620 Wolf, *Große Rechtsdenker*, 344.

621 *De officio* II, V, §§ 2, 5–7 (= pp. 115 ff.); cf. *Jus naturae* VII, 1, §§ III–IV (= II, 112 ff.).

622 *Jus naturae* VII, 2, § XIII (= II, 142).

623 *Jus naturae* III, 2, § VIII (= I, 323).

he must submit both out of his own free will and due to the power of the sovereign. Regarding the sovereign, a double demand is made: he must have power and combine it with just reasoning.[624]

Our notes on Pufendorf must also close with a reference to the structural correspondence between his substantive and his methodological-epistemological approach. His attempt to carve out a third path in natural law is accompanied by the simultaneous rejection of the doctrine of innate ideas and of sensualism,[625] while his polemic against scholastic syllogistics is paired with a moderation of the intellectualism of mathematical natural science. Pufendorf indeed wishes to proceed *more geometrico*, but the individual deductions should, according to his methodological ideal, proceed from first principles that can be confirmed by experience and observation.[626] Naturally, experience does not simply coincide with mere "appearance," which also allows for its normative use—that is, its subordination to the intellect of an *ens morale*. Thus, the combination of *duplicia principia*, namely *rationalia* et *experimentalia*,[627] ultimately signifies a union of historical experiential judgments with ethical principles.[628] Even Pufendorf's purely historical work is a sign of this coexistence of reason and experience, as understood within his methodological ideal—even if he was unable to provide a final proof of the logical compatibility between the historical and the natural-law approach.[629]

624 *De officio* I, II, §§ 4–5 (= pp. 13 f.).
625 References in Welzel, *Naturrechtslehre Pufendorfs*, 17.
626 References in Denzer, *Moralphilosophie und Naturrecht bei Pufendorf*, 288 ff.
627 *Elementorum* II, Axiom. I, § 1 (= p. 244).
628 Wolf, *Große Rechtsdenker*, 321, cf. 324.
629 Krieger, *History and Law in the Seventeenth Century*, esp. pp. 203 f., 205 f., 210.

CHAPTER THREE
Cartesianism and Anti-Cartesianism

1. The Symptomatic Significance of Cartesianism for Intellectual-Historical Positioning of the Enlightenment

The advance into the second half of the 17th century was necessary in order to be able to illustrate all the logical possibilities originally inherent in early modern rationalism through concrete examples. With this groundwork laid, we now want to turn to the question of the intellectual-historical positioning of the Enlightenment. Which of the tendencies previously described, in what form and to what extent, came to dominate within it? Only after clarifying this are we entitled to speak of its specific character—though only insofar as the almost bewildering diversity of the age permits such a claim. Preliminarily and still undifferentiated, the answer is as follows: from around the last third of the 17th century, an intellectual movement begins in which the rehabilitation of sensibility is pursued no longer primarily in the sense of mathematical natural science, but in an (epistemologically) anti-intellectualist and (moral-philosophically) anti-ascetic sense. Thus, a (partial) reversal of the previous overall picture takes place: previously, the cultivation of mathematical or at least mathematically-evident-seeking thought, in whatever form, was the surest sign of belonging to the *Neuengalt* [i.e., the new intellectual regime]—[630]even if, like Hobbes, one otherwise professed sensualism —whereas the skeptical thesis that man is little more than purely animalistic nature did not set the tone, even though it had already been articulated in full consequence. This reversal certainly does not mean

630 Röd, in *Geometry, Spirit, and Nature*, p. 8, aptly highlighted the role that the adoption of scientific methodology—no matter how superficial it may have been—played in the substantive emancipation of various fields of the humanities (including political philosophy) from scholasticism.

that the Enlightenment simply gives up the conviction that man is or should be master over nature. That could not happen without conceding something fundamental to theology—and this was out of the question at a time when the struggle against theology was intensifying and becoming ever more open. Through Newton, the essential aspects of the mathematical-natural scientific model were carried over into the Enlightenment, but, as Newton's reception shows, they were more or less reinterpreted. This reinterpretation largely consisted in thinking together "man as nature" and "man as master over nature," such that precisely the free development of all (not just intellectual) natural faculties of man would result in the most advantageous relation to external nature. As one can easily see, in this process the concept of strict dominion over nature largely transforms into the idea or dream of reconciliation or even fusion with it—a notion that had already emerged through the revival of Stoic tradition in the 16th and 17th centuries, but that in the Enlightenment now presented itself in a self-conscious and programmatic form. Of particular importance is the transformation that the concept of nature thereby underwent: with the human being who now feels free as nature and as master, there is reconciled an external nature that is no longer a lifeless machine in itself, but partly a protective deity and partly a caring servant. This transformation of the concept of nature will still have to occupy us, as it will become clear that the attempt to harmonize two such different ideas as "man is nature" and "man rules over nature" brought about the greatest ambiguities, recantations, and contradictions in Enlightenment thought, which constantly emerged in the conflict between the causal and the normative.[631]

This "thinking of the Enlightenment," however, is merely a guiding ideal-typical abstraction. Under the just-described ideal type, one could only subsume what we may call the (itself diverse and expansive) main current of the Enlightenment movement. Alongside it—indeed, often partially intermixed with it—there are tendencies that would have to be classified as direct continuations or further developments of the two theses already clearly articulated in the 16th and 17th centuries: that man is nature, and that man rules over nature.

631 For the transformation of the concept of nature and the conflict between causal and normative aspects, see below, Chapter IV, Section 3, and Chapter VI.

What is telling for the general anti-intellectualist physiognomy of the movement is that the former thesis, despite the skepticism connected with it and precisely because of its appealing anti-intellectualist tone, is more strongly represented than the latter, which sought to secure man's dominion over external and internal nature by intellectualist means. The rehabilitation of sensibility now proceeds so irresistibly, it unfolds in such a worldview-drunken fervor, that it becomes distrustful of any form of intellectualism—even when that intellectualism stands on modern ground, i.e., shares the conviction that sensibility or nature constitutes the only possible and worthy object of genuinely rational thought. This is no longer sufficient. The anti-ascetic tone grows ever louder, and with it, the general attack intensifies against the bastions of that institution which seemed ex officio to pursue the suppression of human sensuality. And as the role of sensibility in the anthropological reflections of the time is increasingly emphasized, the suppression of the sensual human being by the Church is correspondingly perceived as a violation of human nature itself. The paganistic feeling for life gains ground in the broader development; and it has rightly been seen as a significant commonality between the Enlightenment and the Renaissance.[632]

In this constellation, Cartesianism takes on a symptomatic significance. Its fate reflects the shift described in the historical development of modern rationalism. It cannot be denied—and we will see it confirmed in several examples—that the Enlightenment as a whole is marked by a rejection of Cartesian core positions.[633] However, it would be shortsighted to try to grasp the entire process with philological criteria alone, or to derive the Enlightenment as such

632 The valuable aspect of Gay's overall—at least qualitatively—weak contribution lies in his emphasis on this perspective in *The Rise of Modern Paganism*, especially pages 257 and following, and 269 and following.
633 In an important article, Beyer convincingly refuted the assumption, primarily advocated by literary historians like Brunchière and Lanson (see especially *L'influence de la philosophie cartésienne*, p. 517 and following), that the Enlightenment originated from the anti-authoritarian and rationalistic Cartesian spirit. He did so by identifying the essence of Cartesianism more with intellectualism, which, in the 18th century (under the influence of Newton, etc.), was clearly displaced by the empiricist movement (see *From Cartesianism to the Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, especially p. 32 and following).

from a simple opposition to Descartes. Yet this nearly universal opposition expresses something specific about the Enlightenment, and that legitimizes using its relation to Descartes as a guiding thread and interpreting it in its symptomatic meaning. Explaining the paradox that Descartes—the systematic philosophical opponent of scholasticism—became the scapegoat rather than the prophet of the Enlightenment (which otherwise portrayed itself as the definitive overcoming of all scholasticism) should prove highly illuminating. The solitude that marked Descartes's life continued after his death. He did not really function as the precursor to a cohesive school (even the prominent thinkers who drew positive inspiration from him abandoned important parts of his doctrine); rather, he became a stumbling block. As often happens, someone became a classic—whether as a positive or negative point of reference—whose work could be interpreted in opposite directions and thereby provoke fierce disputes or decisively contribute to clarifying philosophical lines of conflict, because it formulated a question, central to the spirit of the age, with an unprecedented radicality. Descartes put his finger on the nerve point of modern rationalism, one that threatened to become its festering wound: namely, the question of the scope and meaning of the rehabilitation of sensibility in relation to the mind. He could never have become a stumbling block unless this question struck at the core of modern rationalism. The sharply drawn problem of the relationship between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* could no longer be ignored, precisely because of the rigor of the Cartesian separation, without proposing solutions grounded in a worldview.

In other words: Descartes brought the first great phase of the long struggle against the old worldview to completion and, at the same time, to an end—this phase being primarily marked by the mathematically oriented natural sciences. But in the 18th century, it is not the mathematical-scientific, but the anti-ascetically understood rehabilitation of sensibility that gains the upper hand. This splits the ideological rationalism into two camps, and the split is irreconcilable in that it has considerable consequences for all levels of philosophical endeavor. The mathematically-scientific rehabilitation of sensibility ultimately led to a new primacy of the intellect—this time a modern or rationalist one—and this primacy could be interpreted not only in an epistemological but also in a moral-philosophical sense. For the same

reason, the programmatic rejection of asceticism in the 18th century—not only in its extreme Christian forms—goes hand in hand with the rejection of mathematical methodology. And beyond that, since mathematical intellectualism is rejected, there is an emphasis on the rootedness of the mind in biological, psychological, or socio-historical sensibility. All of this happens on a large scale during the second major phase of the struggle against what was seen as "Scholasticism" and so forth. This is not the place to list the socio-historical reasons for this shift or radicalization. But it is obvious that Descartes' treatment of sensibility was unsuitable for the purposes of the new movement. Through his sharp separation of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, Descartes made sensibility ideologically unusable. And in the 18th century, what was sought above all was its ideological usability. The moral-philosophical interest in the broadest sense came to the fore, and because the advocates of the anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensibility generally also wished (and even had) to appear as proponents of a new morality (in order not to discredit their position with the suspicion of nihilism), they needed a flexible conception of sensibility—one whose interweaving with the mind would imply, and ontologically-anthropologically support, the possibility of a morality without asceticism. Descartes had mechanized and de-spirited sensibility to such an extent that, in its condition as he framed it, its moral-philosophical consideration could only promote materialism or immoralism. But that was too far even for the advocates of anti-ascetic morality, who nonetheless refused to locate moral capacity exclusively in the intellect.

The reaction against Descartes did not take long. This is hardly surprising when we consider that Descartes merely brought one basic tendency of modern rationalism either to its (radically conceived) conclusion—through the idea of a consistent mathematical physics—or inaugurated it—through the philosophical grounding and expansion of that idea. But the *other* tendency, which would assert itself with particular force during the Enlightenment, was already present before Descartes and immediately found ways to oppose him—indeed, as some objections to the *Meditationes* show, in a form already mature and direction-setting for future debates. By giving the position he advocated a sharp and philosophically generalized expression, Descartes forced the countercurrent to do its own conceptual work. It

now often had to appear explicitly as a reaction to Descartes, such that the emergence of the Enlightenment, in the sense previously outlined, partially overlaps with the emergence of *anticartesianism*. It is no coincidence, then, that Cartesianism found the least traction in the birthplace of the Enlightenment—England—[634] and that the works of the English Enlightenment's pioneers, from the Cambridge Platonists to Locke and Newton, contain clear rejections of Descartes.

2. Fundamental Lines of Cartesian Thought

Descartes is considered the founder of modern philosophy, at least insofar as it revolves around the problem of self-consciousness and method. This assessment is largely correct, but it must be qualified by pointing out that it is not philosophy but rather mathematical natural science that marks the true beginning of modernity. Our evaluation of Descartes' role must therefore differ depending on whether we are writing a history of philosophy or a broader intellectual history in which the history of philosophy is only a part. If Descartes gave philosophy a new direction—or, more cautiously, created a new philosophical direction—he simultaneously accomplished, as already suggested in the previous section, nothing other than the completion of the intellectual approach of mathematical natural science by philosophical means. This view, however, requires justification, especially since the question of the relationship between mathematical physics, method, and metaphysics in Descartes is a matter of scholarly dispute. It cannot be disentangled without clear conceptual distinctions.

First, logical and genetic priority must be clearly distinguished, while keeping in mind the limits of their respective domains of validity. Second, one must initially separate the levels of mathematics (or mathematical physics), method, and metaphysics in Descartes, for only in this way can we understand how they are connected and how logical and genetic priority relate to one another on each of these levels. Descartes himself suggests the distinction between logical and

634 Stephen, *History of English Thought*, Vol. I, p. 32.

genetic or empirical priority when he declares his intention to proceed according to the *ordre des raisons* rather than the *ordre des matières*.[635] From the logical standpoint of his completed philosophical system, Descartes assigns primacy to metaphysics over both mathematics[636] and physics,[637] while also linking the certainty of method to certain metaphysical assumptions.[638] As the structure of the *Principia* shows, the mature Descartes attempts to deduce physical and mathematical principles from metaphysical ones, and it is reasonable to assume that placing mathematical physics within a metaphysical framework must have had some substantive consequences—i.e., that metaphysically framed physics likely appeared somewhat different from the physics Descartes practiced before 1629. In this case, logical priority truly takes precedence over developmental or historical priority—but the limits of this precedence should not be overlooked. There is no reason to believe Descartes fundamentally altered his earlier physics under metaphysical pressure. It would therefore be incorrect to conclude from the metaphysical priority within the completed system that metaphysics chronologically preceded his finished physics—especially since Descartes' known mathematical and scientific writings were composed or published after the crystallization of his metaphysics.[639] To overlook the years during which Descartes was a physicist without metaphysics,[640] called himself a *physicus-mathematicus*, and by his own account had no particular interest in philosophy,[641] is not just biographically unjustified[642] but also misleading. This period was

635 Letter to Mersenne from December 24, 1640 (= AT III, 266 f.).
636 Principia Philosophiae I, 5 and 13 = AT VIII, 6, 9f.; cf. Second Replies, AT VII, 141; Fifth Replies = AT VII, 384.
637 Principia, Preface = AT IX², 14.
638 Cf. Previous passages in notes.
639 Thus Hamelin, *Le Système de Descartes*, 29. Liard correctly recognized (in *Descartes*, p. 95) the importance of the chronological priority of Descartes' engagement with mathematical physics. However, his thesis that the fundamental principles of mathematical physics arose directly from the method (p. 101f.) is at least one-sided—assuming as it does that the method emerged independently of any substantive engagement (see below).
640 Using a phrase from Gouhier, *Les premières Pensées*, p. 90.
641 Discours, Part III = AT VI, 30.
642 Gilson has even shown that the narrative of the *Discours* must be corrected in key respects, as it presents Descartes' relationship to study after 1616 as

precisely when Descartes, through his engagement with physics and mathematics, developed a generalizing procedure that enabled him, at the right moment, to move rapidly from the mature formulation of his method to the conception of his metaphysics. In our view, the sequence was thus: Descartes first, based on his reflections on the nature of mathematics, developed a method with a claim to general validity—just as a few years later, reflections on the nature of method substantially influenced the structure of his metaphysics, even if they did not directly generate metaphysics as such. His intense work in mathematics decisively contributed to the emergence of the method, just as the examination of method facilitated, in a purely logical sense, the birth of metaphysics in the form known to us.

As for the first point, Descartes' famous dream and the emergence of his method should not be imagined as a sudden inspiration, but rather as the crystallization point of a long process. His mathematical work occupies the years 1612–1616—[643]a factor of greater long-term significance than any subsequent (possible) interruption of this work. In the *Discours*, Descartes frankly admits that his reflection on logic, algebra, and geometry—along with the desire to develop their respective advantages and remedy their shortcomings—provided the impetus for his method. The identified shortcoming is their restriction to limited objects (e.g., figures),[644] but their advantages had already been extensively discussed in the *Regulae*. Descartes is impressed by the inherent capacity of mathematics to proceed through pure deduction,[645] to remain uninfluenced by the senses, and to rely on neither phantasmata nor figures.[646] Only *mathematica vulgaris* deals with such things, but this is merely the outer shell of true mathematics, which coincides with *mathesis universalis*—an overarching science meant to encompass all branches of human knowledge[647] by

more casual than it likely was, based on other available evidence (*Discours, Texte et Commentaire*, pp. 150 ff.).

643 Baillet, *Vie*, Vol. I, pp. 29 f., 38.

644 Discours, Part II = AT VI, 17, 19 f.

645 Rule II = AT X, 365.

646 To Mersenne, July 1641 = AT III, 395; Discours, Part IV = AT VI, 39; Meditationes, I and V = AT VII, 20, 64.

647 Rules, IV = AT X, 374.

abstracting from their material aspects or specific content.[648] The direct derivation of *mathesis universalis* from the mathematical ideal becomes clear in its stated task: to make explicit everything that can be examined with respect to *ordo* (order) and *mensura* (measure).[649]

The *mathesis universalis* is the method itself in its concrete application. The methodological ideal draws from the dream of all-encompassing knowledge and is conceived with this total knowledge's requirements and presumed structure in mind. Crucial for our inquiry is the fact that Descartes, immediately after developing the concept of *mathesis universalis* (or method) by purging mathematics of everything material or accidental, uses this very method—originally derived from mathematics—as the foundation for (applied) mathematics itself.[650] From the perspective of the clearly grasped and actualized methodological ideal, the intellectual stimuli that originally led to it become its domains of application; thus, logical and genetic priority trade places. What was genetically primary now appears logically deficient, and by being reclassified accordingly, it loses its original significance. This dialectic also characterizes Descartes' transition to metaphysics. If we wish to understand him from the standpoint of method and summarize it briefly, we may say: Descartes projected the character of mathematical knowledge—its independence from sensory experience and the senses altogether—into ontology through the sharp distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The goal of mathematics operating under Cartesian method is to overcome any dependence on intuitive forms, such as those common in ancient mathematics. Because of its achieved universality and intellectuality, it can be applied to the ideas of pure intellect and prepares the *cogito* as the starting point for methodical philosophy.[651] The interconnection between pure mathematics (or mathematically inspired method) and metaphysics becomes concretely visible in the model-like role played by the mathematical theory of proportions in structuring Descartes' metaphysics.[652] What interests us most here, however, is the way Descartes' metaphysical dualism is foreshadowed by the strict

648 Rules, XIV = AT X, 452; Discours, II = AT VI, 19 (cf. Rules, I = AT X, 361).
649 Rules, IV = AT X, 378.
650 Rules, XIV = AT X, 442; Discours, II = AT VI, 21.
651 Vuillemin, *Mathématiques et Métaphysique chez Descartes*, 139 f., cf. 166.
652 Vuillemin, op. cit., 119 ff.

intellectualist orientation of his mathematically inspired and structured methodology.

Of the three *modi cognoscendi*, says Descartes, only the intellect contributes to the acquisition of firm truth,[653] only it can successfully handle the two main organs of methodical procedure, i.e., *Intuition* and *Deduction*.[654] It must therefore stay as far as possible from the imagination, which refers to material things,[655] and from the senses, as long as it is not dealing with bodily things;[656] the assistance of the two lower faculties of knowledge is certainly always welcome,[657] but the *pensées qui occupent l'imagination* are clearly distinguished from those that occupy the *entendement*.[658] From this it follows that true knowledge of the external world can only come about through the mediation of *ideas*,[659] and furthermore that, since these *ideas* themselves are *cogitationes*, i.e., components or products of the functioning intellect,[660] the said knowledge not only implies a self-relation of the intellect, but is precisely based on such a relation.[661] Precisely because self-referentiality of the intellect or identity of essence between the knower and the known determines the degree of perfection of knowledge, Descartes can claim that nothing can be known more readily than the intellect itself, especially since all other knowledge depends on it.[662] – At the end of this line of thought, which began with the effort of a complete intellectualization of mathematics for the sake of obtaining a universally applicable methodology, stands the terse thesis: *intelligo, ergo mentem habeo a corpore distinctam*.[663] This principle of dualistic metaphysics is characteristically already

653 Rules, VIII = AT X, 395 f., 398.
654 Rules, III = AT X, 368.
655 Discours, IV = AT VI, 37; Meditationes, II = AT VII, 28; Fifth Replies = AT VII, 387; to Mersenne, July 1641 = AT III, 395.
656 Rules, XII = AT X, 416 f.
657 Rules, XII = AT X, 411.
658 To Elisabeth, June 28, 1643 = AT III, 692 f.
659 To [Gibieuf], January 19, 1642 = AT III, 474, 476.
660 Meditationes, III = AT VII, 35; Second Replies = AT VII, 160; to Mersenne, July 1641 = AT III, 392 f.
661 Meditationes, VI = AT VII, 73; to Mersenne, July 1641 = AT III, 394.
662 Rules, VIII = AT X, 395.
663 Rules, XII = AT X, 422.

expressed in the *Regulae*, which are known to be devoted to the problem of method, and this is indeed significant for the origin of Cartesian metaphysics.[664] Descartes himself explicitly links the *Cogito*-principle with the thesis of the exclusive capacity for knowledge of the intellect.[665]

We now want to show that, alongside the mathematically-methodical considerations of the *Regulae* and at roughly the same time, mathematico-physical aspects also pushed toward the formation of metaphysical dualism. First, however, we must once again point out the necessity of clear conceptual distinctions, which are meant to facilitate interpretive work. It has been noted that although the origin of Cartesian metaphysics from mathematical physics seems plausible from a genetic-psychological point of view, Descartes could nonetheless have either remained within the latter and become a second Galileo, or developed a different metaphysics.[666] Regarding the latter point, skepticism is warranted. Descartes' conception of mathematics and the associated methodological approach forced his metaphysics *a limine* in a certain direction: a monistic materialism would, in his case, be unthinkable—or only possible at the price of logical contradictions (such as can be found in Hobbes)—to say nothing of the mentioned structural parallel between the theory of mathematical proportions and metaphysics.[667] If Descartes was bound by certain preliminary decisions when he transitioned to metaphysics, then on the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the necessity of this transition cannot be proven. But here too one should differentiate and relativize. For from the (largely correct) claim that Descartes' true contribution to intellectual history lies not in his mechanistic physics—

664 It is therefore at least genetically questionable to view the cogito principle solely as a consequence of metaphysical dualism (as in Smith, *Studies in Cartesian Philosophy*, 14 ff.), and not also as a consequence of the epistemological-methodological dualism which, at least in part (i.e., alongside considerations from mathematical physics), paved the way for metaphysical dualism.

665 Meditationes, II = AT VII, 29–34; Second Replies = AT VII, 132; Fifth Replies = AT VII, 360; Principia Philosophiae, I, 7–8 = AT VIII, 7; to Mersenne, July 1641 = AT III, 394.

666 Gilson, *Études*, 175.

667 See above.

which, incidentally, was in large part developed elsewhere—[668]but in the formulation of a systematic metaphysics, it does not directly follow that the step to metaphysics had nothing to do with his physics or mathematics or with external causes.[669] In other words, from the uniqueness of Descartes' achievement it does not follow *eo ipso* and not with certainty that the genesis of this achievement is hermeneutically ungraspable. Not only do the metaphysical preliminary decisions suggested by mathematical physics and mathematically conceived method offer us a logical guiding thread, but also the concrete situation in which Descartes found himself when he systematically—or in the sense of an explicit metaphysics—elaborated these preliminary decisions can at least partially be reconstructed. To this end, Descartes' relationship to Scholasticism shall be considered from several angles.

First, the aspect of the worldview opposition. The formation of Cartesian metaphysics, which tellingly follows immediately upon the interrupted composition of the *Regulae*, is in turn interrupted in order to apply the already established fundamental results to problems of physics.[670] Descartes now feels capable of fighting his universal adversary on all fronts. It is very likely that Descartes would not have needed a metaphysics if his scholastic opponent—whose physics Descartes knew well and had early rejected—had not possessed a metaphysics of his own, one which functioned as the logical foundation of that physics. The Aristotelian-scholastic unity of physics and metaphysics thus had to be replaced, and Scholasticism became the negative standard of Cartesian thought. The demand for total knowledge, on the other hand, was suggested by the nature of mathematical knowledge (as Descartes understood it). Since mathematics proceeds securely precisely because it proceeds deductively,[671] the most secure starting point of knowledge must *eo ipso* be the most general—and at the same time the simplest. This automatically raises the question whether one actually possesses such a starting point if one remains with mathematics or mathematical physics and the method derived from them, without any overarching theory—in other words, without metaphysics. Descartes ultimately

668 Lenoble, *Mersenne*, especially chapters X and XI, 336 ff., 383 ff.

669 This is asserted by Alquié, *Descartes*, 71.

670 To Mersenne, October 8, 1629 = AT I, 25; cf. Gilson, *Études*, 150 ff.

671 Rules, II = AT X, 365.

becomes convinced that only metaphysical principles are the most general, only they allow truly grounded intuition and deduction.[672] The inner logic of mathematically inspired method thus itself necessitates the subordination of mathematics and mathematical physics, and of the method related to them; from the broader metaphysical standpoint, all of these must appear deficient or logically inferior, whereby logical priority once again asserts itself over genetic priority. This, in my view, is the reason Descartes interrupted the composition of the *Regulae* just before the first formulation of the metaphysics he had by then anticipated, never to resume it. The change of his views, which he himself admitted,[673] most likely concerned the question of the knowability of ultimate principles in a metaphysical sense, or the unified treatment of physics and metaphysics.[674] As said, there are no indications pointing to a fundamental change in the content of Descartes' earlier physics. Previously, Descartes may have believed he could get by as a mathematical physicist or mechanist, and now feels relieved that metaphysics allows him to deliver a forceful rejection of the atheism he feared would lurk within pure mechanism. Since he now holds the ultimate metaphysical principles to be knowable (at least sufficiently so to rely on them), he wants to derive all particulars from this new and final general.[675] From this attained summit of generalization, he can reproach Galileo for lacking *vrais principes de la physique*.[676] All of this connects with a basic trait of Descartes' individual thinking style—namely, that he is more interested in criteria than in facts,[677] and tends to neglect experimental particulars in favor of general grasp or interpretation of the matter.[678]

Let us now turn to the psychological aspect of Descartes' relationship to Scholasticism. One could, of course, simply set

672 See above.
673 Sixth Replies = AT VII, 40 f.
674 This is inferred from the letter to Vatier, February 22, 1638, AT I, 561.
675 Discours, VI = AT VI, 64 f.; Principia, Preface = AT IX², 5, 10.
676 To Mersenne, June 22, 1637 = AT I, 392; cf. to Mersenne, August 14, 1634 and October 11, 1638 = AT I, 305 and II, 380.
677 In a good formulation by Gilson, *Études sur le Rôle*, 137, which is adopted by Specht, *Innovation und Folgelast*, 98.
678 Milhaud, *Descartes savant*, 194 f.

metaphysics aside, unmask the generality of its principles as theological pseudo-concepts *in toto*, and refuse to fight the battle on its terrain, instead shifting the entire plane of discussion with a single stroke. In that case, Descartes could indeed have become a second Galileo—perhaps nothing less, and certainly nothing more (in a purely philosophical sense). Yet Descartes' relationship to Scholasticism is far more complicated and personally colored than Galileo's. As his biographer correctly noted, Descartes maintained the *docilité* of a pupil toward his teacher throughout his life;[679] his highest personal ambition remained to replace Scholasticism with a new, equally comprehensive system, whose clarity and coherence might impress even his Jesuit teachers. His metaphysics emerged at a particular stage in his development, when he—also encouraged by acquaintances, among whom was notably the papal nuncio Cardinal de Berulle—[680] had begun to write down the results of his earlier efforts. It served not only to universalize his approach and thus logically support those results, but also to eliminate *a limine* any suspicion of atheism or materialism that might arise from the mechanism of mathematical natural science. Descartes could thus display both disarming comprehensiveness and flawless religiosity. Immediately upon formulating his metaphysics, he made its written presentation dependent on the reception of his physics, and in the same tone emphasized the need to combat atheism.[681] The axis of Cartesian metaphysics—namely the implication-rich separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*—was perfectly suited to demonstrate both the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. In this matter, Descartes could even outdo the Scholastics, since in his eyes—unlike his innate ideas—[682]the school's empiricism could not definitively

679 Baillet, *Vie*, I, 302 ff.; II, 225 f., 489 f. and passim; cf. the eloquent *Epistola* to the Jesuits prefixed to the *Meditationes*, AT VII, 1–6.

680 Letter to Villebressieu, Summer 1631 = AT I, 213.

681 To Mersenne, April 15, 1630 = AT I, 144 f.

682 Already in the *Cogitationes privatae* from January 1619 he writes: "sunt in nobis semina scientiae" = AT X, 217; Rules, IV and VIII = AT X, 373, 376 ("semina"), 397; Discours, VI = AT VI, 64 ("semences"); *Meditationes* III and V = AT VII, 38 and 64; *First Replies* = AT VII, 105, 117; *Principia Philosophiae* I, 49 = AT VIII, 23; to Mersenne, June 16, 1641 = AT III, 383; to Elisabeth, May 21, 1643 = AT III, 666 f.

prove God and the soul.[683] However, Descartes could only outplay the Scholastics on matters of religion because, precisely at the time he was forming his metaphysics, he drew closer (temporarily) to their Christian opponents—the Platonizing Oratorians—[684]an important external impetus for the fusion of physico-mathematical theses with metaphysical ones. The Augustinian origin of the *cogito*[685] was not lost on his contemporaries, and it clearly reveals the religious, i.e. antimaterialist and antilibertine background of Cartesian metaphysics; not coincidentally, Descartes at times uses *choses immatérielles* and *métaphysique* interchangeably.[686] The Oratorians showed Descartes that Christianity—i.e., God and morality—on the one hand, and Scholasticism on the other, need not be identified with one another. At the same time, Descartes hoped that drawing on Christian, though not Thomist, ideas would give him an additional advantage in his efforts to influence the Jesuits. In essence, he was asking the Jesuits to convert to the theses of their Christian opponents. If the demand was utopian, it at least served to place Descartes' personal piety beyond all doubt.

Especially important is that this resolute elimination of the suspicion of atheism proved to be the best justification for mathematical physics not only in the moral but indeed in the strictly natural-scientific sense. For the metaphysical dualism of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* directly refuted the scholastic doctrine of substantial forms, which, according to Descartes, was based precisely on the inadmissible mingling of soul and body.[687] The associated rejection of teleology as well as Cartesian theory of motion will be discussed elsewhere.[688] Nevertheless, the complete, now metaphysically mandated, de-spiritualization of matter further promoted the early Cartesian inclination toward mathematical natural science and was

683 Discours, IV = AT VI, 37. In expressions aimed against atheism, God and soul are mentioned together, for example in *Meditationes*, *Epistola* and *Praefatio* = AT VII, 1, 9.

684 Gilson, *Liberté chez Descartes*, chapter 5 of part 1 and chapters 4–6 of part 2. Cf. Espinas, *Descartes et la Morale*, I, 66 ff., 212 ff.

685 Blanchet, *Les antécédents historiques...*, especially 47 ff., 139 ff., 270 ff. The *cogito* had, in part, become a commonplace of Christian apologetics at the beginning of the 17th century, 120 ff.

686 For example, *Principia*, Preface = AT IX², 10.

687 To [Abbé de Launay], July 22, 1641? = AT III, 420.

688 Chapter IV, Section 2a.

therefore highly welcome. The identification of matter with extension was already plausible for purely physical reasons, as the Galilean distinction between primary and secondary qualities shows. Descartes adopts this distinction,[689] and by abstracting from color, smell, etc., he takes the decisive step in transforming matter into a uniform domain entirely accessible to mathematics or geometry.[690] In light of this link between the primacy of mathematical procedure in physics and the identity of extension and matter, it is not surprising that the concept of pure extension already plays a paradigmatic role in Descartes' initial attempt to formulate a universally applicable mathematical method—that is, one abstracting from all secondary qualities.[691] Mathematical-physical and mathematical-methodological lines of thought thus played an important preparatory role for Cartesian metaphysics—and in a decisive way. For if the material and the immaterial are programmatically separated on metaphysical grounds, it is no longer metaphysical but only mathematical-physical and mathematical-methodological considerations that can explain why the former is identified specifically with extension.[692] In turn, this fundamental thesis has certain implications that must already be noted here, as they will be central to later debates. The flip side of the reduction of matter to extension is namely the assumption that all extension is matter, whereby a vacuum becomes impossible;[693] from this also follows the infinite divisibility of bodies,[694] which renders atomism unacceptable.[695]

The accumulation and parallel effect of the logical and psychological motives described above, in my opinion, led Descartes to formulate his dualistic metaphysics. Undoubtedly, it brought him great relief. From now on, he could defend his mechanistic physics

689 *Meditationes* II = AT VII, 29 ff.; *Second Replies* = AT VII, 132.

690 In *Principia Philosophiae* IV, 188 = AT VIII, 315, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities is connected with the very possibility of a mathematical physics.

691 Rules, XIV = AT X, 442 ff.

692 *Principia Philosophiae* II, 4 = AT VIII, 42.

693 *Principia Philosophiae* II, 11 = AT VIII, 46.

694 *Principia Philosophiae* II, 23 = AT VIII, 52.

695 *Principia Philosophiae* II, 20 = AT VIII, 51 f. On the route by which Descartes avoids the physical disadvantages of this rejection of atomism, see Lasswitz, *Geschichte der Atomistik*, II, 116.

with a clear conscience and even present it as the best conceivable scientific foundation for principles which, both in his own view and in the eyes of nearly all his contemporaries—especially those for whom he was writing—were indispensable for religion and morality. This good conscience explains why the same Descartes who, upon hearing of Galileo's condemnation, did not dare to complete and publish his treatise *Le Monde*,[696] nevertheless did not hesitate to combat all anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism[697] and to effectively exclude God from the course of the world. Had God left the world in a chaotic state but simultaneously established the laws of nature, material things would over time, without external interference, attain their present state.[698] The metaphysically demonstrated and preserved God is in turn instrumentalized: he assumes specific functions within the mechanistic worldview—and also within Cartesian epistemology: he is to guarantee the infallibility of the first and clearest intuitions.[699] The so-called ontological proof of God, in its specific Cartesian context—apart from its historical precedents—is not least an intensification of mathematical intellectualism into the ontological; tellingly, Descartes discusses the nature of mathematical knowledge in general as a kind of prelude to presenting this proof.[700] We have already spoken about the interweaving of *intellectus* and *cogitatio*, or of knower and known, which grants the former a reality-constituting function and, within mathematical-methodical lines of thought, prepares the thinking style of the ontological proof. The integration of God into the overall schema of mature Cartesian thought and the determination of his tasks is in no way impaired by the view that truths do not exist *per se*, but are established by God.[701] The profession of a voluntaristic God was in

696 To Mersenne, end of November 1633 = AT I, 270 ff.; cf. Baillet, *Vie*, I, 241 ff.
697 *Principia Philosophiae* III, 3 = AT VIII, 81; to Elisabeth, September 15, 1645 = AT IV, 292.
698 *Discours* V = AT VI, 45; *Principia Philosophiae* III, 47 = AT VIII, 102 f.
699 *Meditationes* III = AT VII, 36 f. On the instrumentalization of God see the remarks of Heimsoeth, *Descartes' Methode*, 59, 78, 114, 116 ff. and Cassirer, *Descartes*, 38; very accurately, Röd, *Descartes*, 67 (cf. 119, 123), states that the Cartesian recourse to God outlines the epistemological fact that, due to the restriction to the subject, a final criterion of truth cannot be specified. God thus fills the gap through which skepticism could creep in.
700 *Meditationes* V = AT VII, 64 ff.
701 To Mersenne, April 15 and May 6, 1630 = AT I, 145, 149 f.; to [Arnauld],

fact a required gesture for every opponent of Thomistic scholasticism, and as Pufendorf's example shows, it was adopted polemically even when it involved the proponent in logical difficulties. A defense of divine voluntarism was also encouraged by the need to combat the teleological doctrine associated with the theory of substantial forms. In scholasticism, the distinction between divine intellect and will was used to support the teleological view: God must will what the truths present in his intellect prescribe; thus, the products of his will must contain these truths as *causae finales*. By interweaving divine intellect and will, Descartes withdraws the theological foundation of teleology; God created the world only as *causa efficiens*, and he is also the creator of truths, etc.[702] Still, Descartes lets the structure of his system be hardly influenced by divine voluntarism, especially as he assures that God does not usually alter the truths he created, or rather, that the truths are necessary as such—even if God created them not under the pressure of any necessity.[703]

Our previous analysis implies that it would be naive to detach the Cartesian method from its substantive context and treat it as an autonomous "discovery" with self-evident universal claims. Like any method, it remains tied to specific contents or specific substantive (pre)decisions, even though in its natural aspiration to present itself as universally binding, it must assert its independence from its particular object—or even from time and place; Descartes indeed wanted to treat the individual appropriate results of the sciences as the automatic consequence of the correct application of the method.[704] This is once again that reversal of the genetic and the logical that we've already encountered at key points in Cartesian thought. The very option for a method presupposes something. Descartes—in line with a core conviction of early modern rationalism—opts for the priority of *certitudo modi procedendi* over *certitudo obiecti*; he states quite clearly that whoever seeks truth must not engage with any object about which mathematical certainty cannot be obtained.[705] Thus, the possible

September 27, 1648 = AT V, 223 f.; *Sixth Replies* = AT VII, 435 f.

702 Gilson, *Liberté chez Descartes*, Chapters 2 and 3 of Part 1.

703 To Mersenne, April 15 and May 27, 1630 = AT I, 145, 152 f.; to [Mesland], May 2, 1644 = AT IV, 118 f.

704 Rules, IV = AT X, 372 f.

705 Rules, II = AT X, 366.

certainty determines the dignity of the object of knowledge. A second predecision follows, this time determining which object is worthy of knowledge. As we know, even with Galileo, the belief in the immanent logic of nature was a precondition for mathematical natural science. Descartes thinks no differently when he sees the advantage of mathematical physics in its ability to represent things in the necessity of their behavior; only the knowledge of this necessity—going beyond mere description—makes knowledge truly complete.[706] The possibility of a scientifically fruitful deductive procedure also rests on the belief in the existence of *consequences necessaires*.[707]

The call for methodical thinking is, at its core, a declaration of power—that is, an exhortation to accept certain world-view positions lying *ultra methodum et rationem*. Through the apparent impartiality of method, this declaration of power seeks to objectify itself and thereby make itself invulnerable. The "power-feeling of rational thinking",[708] which Descartes illustrates so strikingly, intensifies in proportion to the extent that it adopts the form of impersonal method. Equally decisive is the polemical background of Cartesian doubt. It must once again be recalled that by Descartes' time, it had become commonplace to place radical doubt at the beginning of the polemic against Scholasticism.[709] In the 17th century, even devout metaphysicians began with doubt—almost as a tribute to the spirit of the age—despite the fact that it was not actually welcome to them, and they immediately distanced themselves from any form of skepticism.[710] This historically conditioned constellation also appears in Descartes, who on the one hand claims that Aristotle (it is clear who is meant)

706 To Mersenne, March 11, 1640 = AT III, 39.

707 *Recherche de la Vérité* = AT X, 496 f., 503.

708 According to a phrase by Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen*, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, 349.

709 See above, Chapter II, notes 337 and 338.

710 How widespread this type of skepticism was in the 17th century has been shown by Wiley in her book *The Subtle Knot* (esp. 21, 65 ff., 74 ff., 96, 125 f., 213 ff.). The author, however, tries to generalize this kind of skepticism, which she calls "creative," and to identify it with a "sceptic pattern" stable since antiquity (59). Thus, she lumps together heterogeneous phenomena and overlooks deeper causes and ultimate consequences of modern skepticism. Characteristic of this naiveté is the claim that in the 18th century skepticism diminishes or disappears (230 f.).

aspired to omniscience, and that this must be countered by Socratic doubt,[711] while at the same time he emphasizes that doubt does not imply a lingering in skepticism.[712] If doubt must not overstep certain boundaries, then it is essentially a fiction—a dramatic but conventional gesture on the philosophical stage. For the world-view decisions have already been made and are not themselves in question; the validity of mathematical methodology, for instance, is never seriously doubted. Quite the opposite: doubt is supposed to be eradicated by applying this method. The fictitiousness of doubt must show itself precisely where its intensity appears to reach a peak. Doubt is not a constant companion of thinking; it does not obstruct the systematic construction of thought, but rather represents an early stage of intellectual effort—one that is meant to be definitively overcome.[713] Thus, the matter once again appears in the logical sequence of the completed system; genetically-psychologically, however, doubt is more of a luxury that thought permits itself in its external self-presentation only when the new certainties following doubt are already firmly in place.

Radical doubt, then, is not meant to shake all certainty, but rather to destabilize the certainties of the opponent; it already contains within itself an indirect commitment to the new certainties and serves as their harbinger. For this reason, it does not smell of resignation but is militant and existentially charged—the existential intensity of the new worldview comes to full expression in it. The intellect of the subject who doubts in this sense encompasses their entire inner life, which has been set into violent motion by the collapse of formerly firm convictions: "*Ego sum res cogitans, id est dubitans, affirmans, negans, pauca intelligens, multa ignorans*" [in the French version, this passage tellingly adds: "*qui aime, qui hait*"], volens, nolens, imaginans etiam et sentiens.[714]" And like doubt, the new certainty is also existentially shaped, given immediately, so that the object of knowledge, as it were, dissolves into the knower and serves as an objective confirmation of

711 *Principia*, Preface = AT IX², 5 f.

712 *Discours* III = AT VI, 28 f.

713 Röd, *Descartes*, 54, aptly observes that doubt for Descartes is not an end in itself but a means of isolating certainty; to doubt is to search for certainty, for security. Röd subtly links this search for security with traits of Descartes' personal character.

714 *Meditationes* III = AT VII, 34 (cf. AT IX¹, 27).

the foundational stance. Intuition provides a "conceptum" exalted above all doubt, one that is "a sola rationis luce nascitur.[715]" Intuitive reason discovers the simplest elements or principles from which deduction must proceed.[716] Descartes then contrasts intuition and its grasp of the simple and the clear with Scholastic syllogistics,[717] though the heat of polemic leads him rather hastily to assert that even his deduction has little to do with syllogistics—[718]yet since he refuses to rely on the senses, he can still derive only axioms and definitions from the simple natures that are the object of intuition.[719] What interests us here is precisely that existential elevation or worldview-driven intuitive certainty, which leads to the neglect of purely logical points in favor of polemical consistency—and which is reflected in Descartes' theoretical merging of will and intellect in the process of knowledge.[720] It would be entirely wrong to conclude from this that Descartes was not a rationalist. At least according to our understanding of rationalism, Descartes' appeal to intuition is not an argument against his rationalism, since it is meant to confirm his rationalist worldview in its living immediacy. Anyone who denies Descartes' rationalism simply overlooks the worldview-content aspect of his rationalism and wants to use *the one Rationalism* as a (formal) yardstick.[721]

715 Rules III = AT X, 368; cf. a letter to the [Marquis of Newcastle?], from March or April 1648 = AT V, 137 f. Although the later Descartes replaces the term "intuition" with "inspection," his substantive position remains unchanged; see Kemp Smith, *New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes*, 228.
716 Rules III, VI, XII = AT X, 369 f., 382 f., 427 f.
717 e.g. *Principia Philosophiae* I, 10 = AT VIII, 8.
718 Rules VII, X = AT X, 389, 405 f.
719 Kemp Smith, *Studies*, 39.
720 *Meditationes* IV = AT VII, 56, 57. On this, see Mahnke, *Der Aufbau des philosophischen Wissens*, 82 ff.
721 Thus, for the empiricist (and likewise, in a modified sense, the rationalist) Kemp Smith, Descartes' intuitionism is "a Platonic mysticism, and not a sane rationalism" (*Studies*, 43). Similarly Laporte: he predefines the "true" concept of rationalism (*Le Rationalisme de D.*, XIX) and from there concludes that Descartes was not a rationalist. Laporte makes a double mistake: he overlooks the existential dimension of early modern rationalism, and therefore interprets the use of intuition as a deviation from rationalism rather than a confirmation of Cartesian rationalist content; secondly, he takes Descartes' polemical

As we have seen, Descartes was able to carry his cosmological mechanism so far because he could link it argumentatively with the attempt to dispel the suspicion of atheism. Similar considerations exert an especially strong influence in the formation of his anthropology and moral philosophy. Just as the world could have reached its present state without direct intervention from God, so too can the body function purely mechanically, without the help of the soul.[722] The intended consequence is precisely the complete autonomy of the mind, such that the intellect could operate even without a brain[723] and the sense of personal identity is said to be entirely independent of the body.[724] As a moral statement, the sharp separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* was directed against the contemporary libertines, from whom Descartes hoped to increase the appeal of his philosophy in the eyes of Scholastics and of the officially dominant Christian camp in general. A similar moral side-aim also applied to the fundamental distinction between human and animal that accompanied metaphysical dualism; the libertines, following Montaigne, emphasized their similarities, and as a result Cartesian mechanism and Christian spiritualism could form an alliance.[725] Descartes accordingly draws a direct connection between this distinction and the doctrine of immortality.[726] As expected, the clear theoretical separation of soul and body transforms into the moral demand for the absolute subordination of the latter to the former, whereby the freedom of the will must be postulated.[727] Even the weakest souls, he claims, could achieve total control over the passions through sufficient effort.[728] The intellectualist tendency becomes evident when Descartes says that morality is based on *"des jugements fermes et déterminés touchant la*

agnosticism—also adopted by several other early modern rationalists—at face value. Gueroult (*Descartes*, 294 ff.) defends Descartes' rationalism, but does so by relying on the not particularly fruitful distinction between "reason" and "feeling," thereby indirectly adopting Laporte's criteria.

722 *Meditationes* VI = AT VII, 87 f.; *De homine*, I, Preface = AT XI, 225.

723 *Responsiones Quinta* = AT VII, 358.

724 *Meditationes* VI = AT VII, 78; *Responsiones Secundae* = AT VII, 133.

725 Cf. Espinas, *Descartes et la Morale*, I, 110 ff.

726 *Discours* V = AT VI, 59.

727 *Meditationes* IV = AT VII, 57 f.; *Passions* XLI = AT XI, 359.

728 *Passions* L, XLVIII, XLV = AT XI, 362 f., 366 f., 368 ff.; to Elisabeth, 4 August and 1 September 1645 = AT IV, 265, 284.

connaissance du bien et du mal", and that the strength of the soul is not sufficient to master the passions if knowledge of moral truth is lacking.[729] This view stems from his psychology. In a chapter directed against Aristotle, he rejects the division of the soul into lower and higher parts and asserts its unity, claiming that everything in the soul that resists reason is due to effects of the body.[730] Inner sensuality is thereby eliminated; the passions are traced mainly to the influence of sensory objects, and their only benefit is seen in arousing the soul's desire for things that are generally advantageous to humans.[731] Descartes could thus only maintain the unity of the soul because he simultaneously deepened the split between it and the body. His remarks on their manifold interrelation[732] were, in view of this fundamental position, largely ignored in the 18th century.

The conclusion would be premature that Descartes differs little from Christianity in his moral philosophy. In the fight against the suspicion of nihilism—or out of personal conviction—he does indeed approach Christian positions, but that does not mean he abandoned the terrain of modern thought. His metaphysical turn did not call into question the priority of *certitudo modi procedendi*, and even his defense of Christianity (especially as his relationship with the Oratorians gradually cooled) by no means took the form of pious, petty apologetics of individual dogmas. Rather, it was shaped as a philosophical foundation of general principles (God, immortal soul), upon which perhaps a universally acceptable, in the age of religious wars longed-for (Christian) natural religion might have been based.[733] It is similar in the field of morality: the fight against libertinism does not automatically lead back to Christian morality. Biological and psychic sensuality are not treated by Descartes as spheres of demonic influence, and of the passions he even says they are "toutes bonnes de leur nature".[734] Against the world-renouncing Stoics, whom he finds "cruels",[735] he emphasizes the necessity of reconciling Stoic mastery

729 *Passions* XLVIII and XLIX = AT XI, 367.
730 *Passions* XLVII = AT XI, 364 f.
731 *Passions* LI and LII = AT XI, 371 f.
732 *Meditationes* VI = AT VII, 81; *Passions* XXX–XXXII = AT XI, 351 f.
733 Espinas, *Descartes et la Morale*, I, 238, 243 f., 247.
734 *Passions* CCXI = AT XI, 485.
735 To Elisabeth, 18 May 1645 = AT IV, 201 f.

with Epicurean striving for happiness.[736] *"Aimer la vie sans craindre la mort"* is one of his moral maxims,[737] which gives the impression that belief in immortality primarily serves to free earthly life from fear of death, and thereby make it more enjoyable.[738] Descartes hopes to combat illness and aging through the perfection of medicine.[739] The mastery over nature he envisions is meant, not least, to benefit the sensual human being. No refined textual scholasticism on the part of modern interpreters can obscure this thoroughly modern aspect of Descartes' thought. Nevertheless, this important side of his thinking—like the remarks on the interrelation of soul and body—was not enough to appease his many Enlightenment critics in the 18th century: the fundamental dualism was simply unacceptable, and that alone was decisive.

3. Ambiguous Character and Ambiguous Reception of Cartesianism. The Cambridge Platonists

In the early debate over Cartesianism, many important themes already emerged that, as we shall see later,[740] would remain central. The debate as a whole inevitably revolved primarily around the question of the nature and status of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* on various levels (anthropology, cosmology, etc.), with the fate of the mind and the fate of norms consciously and closely intertwined by all participants. To the modern reader—accustomed to the ideological evasiveness or blandness of professional philosophical publications, often concealed behind convoluted or "cautious" formulations—the openness and directness with which debaters in the 17th century took

736 To Elisabeth, 18 August 1645 = AT IV, 275 ff.
737 To Mersenne, 9 January 1639 = AT II, 480.
738 Cf. the remarks of G. Rodis-Lewis, *Morale de Descartes*, 45.
739 *Discours* VI = AT VI, 62 f.
740 See below, Chapter IV, Section 2 and 3b.

clear positions on fundamentals is striking. They explicitly connected their epistemological or metaphysical assumptions with the question of norms, often acknowledging that the former were shaped or emphasized with a view to the latter. However, the lack of a formally organized professional philosophical culture, shaped by complex and largely internalized conventions, and the often unacademic, free character of the debate, was not the only reason why responses to Cartesianism were so forthrightly articulated on the basis of one's stance toward normative questions. The suspicion of atheism or nihilism began to spread during Descartes' lifetime for the first time in a general way—both due to the systematic displacement of the old worldview by the new natural science,[741] and due to the emergence of a specifically modern skepticism in the wake of Machiavelli and Montaigne. In Descartes' immediate environment, this suspicion could be vividly drawn from the example of so-called *libertinism*. Its intellectual sources, beyond Montaigne's skepticism, included various versions of Italian natural philosophy, which fed into the pantheistic tendencies of Theophile de Viau and Cyrano de Bergerac.[742] The impression that libertine error was of Italian origin was widespread and reinforced by the prolonged stays of well-known libertines in Italy.[743] The rehabilitation of Epicurus, begun during the Renaissance, also made progress—much of which went hand in hand with the advance of libertine attitudes.[744] The colorful heterogeneity of its sources and the fact that it represented more a mode of thinking than an organized movement did not impede the influence and spread of libertinism. Mersenne's claim—that at the time there were no fewer than 50,000 declared or secret libertines in Paris—[745]was certainly a polemically intended dramatization, yet Nicole's (somewhat later)

741 See below, Chapter IV, Sections 1 and 3a.

742 Spink, *French Free-Thought*, 44 ff., 48 ff., 54 ff.

743 Pintard, *Libertinage érudit*, 209 ff., 363 ff. The Italian influences on the development of French libertinism have been vividly described by Busson, who also interprets the new Christian apologetics as a reaction against these currents (*Sources et Développement du Rationalisme*, esp. 94 ff., 242 ff., 566 ff.).

744 Spink, *French Free-Thought*, 133 ff.

745 Espinas, *Descartes et la Morale*, I, 11 ff. It is justified by the subject itself that Espinas begins his analysis of Cartesian moral philosophy with the description of the libertine threat. On Mersenne's reaction to atheists and libertines, see Lenoble, *Mersenne*, 168 ff.

observation that the great heresy was no longer Lutheranism but atheism[746] already indicates the scale of the problem and the concern. The same is reflected in the severity of the reactions: the burning of Vanini in Toulouse in 1619, the persecution of Viau shortly thereafter, and in 1625 the Paris Parliament's ban on the new doctrines—just to mention the most spectacular cases.[747] At the same time, the ideological combat against libertinism and skepticism intensified, as evidenced by Mersenne's voluminous writings.[748] Nonetheless, the general situation had already changed significantly, and theology itself was in the midst of a crisis.[749]

We already noted that Descartes' metaphysical dualism was directed—normatively—against libertinism. There is also no doubt about his personal aversion to this current.[750] Nevertheless, not everyone saw in strict dualism the most effective weapon against libertinism—as Descartes did, and as he also expected others to do. The ambiguity of Cartesianism lay in the fact that precisely that which was supposed to safeguard the mind—namely, the autonomization of matter—could result in undermining the position of the mind itself. For although metaphysical dualism made the mind independent from any attachment to matter, this independence came at the price of having to concede to matter the capacity to carry out purely mechanical functions without any input from the mind. But since the purely mechanical was defined precisely as the absence of mind, its domain could expand indefinitely—depending on whether one attributed this or that function to the work or aid of the mind or to the automatic mechanism. These concerns made the older, more flexible and adaptable blending of mind and matter—as was foundational, not least, for the teleologically inspired doctrine of substantial forms—

746 Cited in Bouillier, *Hist. de la Phil. Cart.*, II, 203 note 3.

747 Details in Pintard, *Libertinage érudit*, 22 ff.

748 The two volumes in question are *L'impiété des déistes, athées et libertins de ce temps*, Paris 1624. To understand Cartesianism as a whole and to confirm our thesis of the conceptual and intellectual-historical opposition between skepticism and mathematical natural science, it is worth noting that in Mersenne's second major work against the skeptics, the existence and structure of mathematical truth is emphasized above all (*La Vérité des sciences*, especially the first five chapters of Book 2, pp. 225 ff.).

749 Gouhier, *La Crise de la Théologie…*, 19 ff.

750 Pintard, *Libertinage érudit*, 203 ff.

appear a more suitable means of controlling matter than a radical separation of the two, with unpredictable—and irreversible—consequences. The early debate over the Cartesian view of animals as machines was shaped by these concerns; because it dealt with fundamental issues, it lasted so long and was fought so tenaciously.[751] Shortly after the appearance of the *Discours*, Froidmont wrote to Descartes that abolishing the soul in animals would ultimately promote atheism.[752] On the theological side, there was a suspicion that a mechanistic explanation of animal life would pave the way for a similar explanation of human life, and thus there was a tendency to attribute a soul to animals—but not their highest or intellectual part. In turn, the Cartesians pointed to the libertines' fondness for highlighting the similarities between humans and animals and insisted that only the view of the animal as machine could eliminate the unpleasant paradox of the immortality of the animal soul.[753]

The Cartesian position, both in particular questions and in general, seemed plausible to some theologians; nevertheless, Descartes' grand plan to win over the Jesuits failed.[754] While Jesuits did incorporate certain points from Cartesian physics into their writings, and Descartes' methodological spirit was generally praised despite substantive opposition, the conflict *in metaphysicis* was irreconcilable and was also broadly perceived as such—[755]even if, at a later stage, Malebranche's modification of Cartesianism managed to convert some Jesuits.[756] The official and detailed condemnation of Cartesianism in 1706 lists thirty points deemed unacceptable by the *Societas*, including: the principle of doubt, divine voluntarism, the identity of matter and extension, the view of animals as machines, the

751 Generally, see the account in Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, I, 144 ff. (on p. 151 n. there's a list of the most important publications on the topic up to the mid-18th century).

752 Letter from 13.9.1637 = AT I, 402 ff.

753 Cf. the account in Busson, *Religion des classiques*, 165 ff.

754 Cf. the insightful remarks by Adam in his Descartes biography, AT XII, 238.

755 Sortais, *Le Cartésianisme chez les Jésuites…*, 1 ff., 5 ff., 11, 51.

756 The most prominent case is that of André, who eventually completely broke with scholasticism and therefore cannot be considered a bridge between the Jesuits and Descartes. On him see Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, II, 372 ff. and Sortais, *Cartésianisme chez les Jésuites*, 21 ff.

distinction between primary and secondary qualities, and also (which must be especially noted in view of 18th-century developments) the thesis that only God can move bodies or that creatures cannot be considered *causae efficientes* with respect to other creatures.[757] For the intellectual configuration of the time—and in comparison to that a century later—it is telling that the Jesuits were more sympathetic to Gassendi.[758] The empiricist epistemology that Gassendi developed in his refutation of the *Meditationes*,[759] along with the related rejection of the knowability of ultimate things, could, as already in Thomas,[760] form the basis for *fideism*. Precisely because Gassendi holds that the idea of God, like any other, arises from the combination or processing of empirical data,[761] he needs—when it comes to proving the existence of God—the assumption of a consistent purposiveness in nature. He even defends the theological idea against Epicurus, his mentor,[762] and seeks to reconcile it with the autonomous lawfulness of nature through the theory that God planted inner teleology into creation from the very first moment, before handing it over to the operation of natural law.[763]

Descartes did not succeed in compensating for his failure with the Jesuits by securing decisive gains among their opponents. It is certainly exaggerated to claim that the Oratorians strongly supported him,[764] especially considering their frequent prohibitions of his teachings.[765] The Jansenists too recoiled from the potential consequences of Cartesian mechanism, even though, like the Oratorians, they sometimes felt aligned with Descartes due to their shared opposition to the Jesuits or common assumptions of Augustinian origin.[766] Precisely in the Netherlands—where

757 See the text of the condemnation in Sortais, *Cartésianisme…*, 37–40.

758 Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, I, 558 f., 562 f.

759 *Disquis. Metaph.*, *Opera* III, 301a (= AT VII, 267).

760 See above, Chapter II, Section 2a. Not coincidentally, Huet in his polemic against Descartes combines motifs from Gassendi and Thomas; see Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, I, 584 f.

761 *Disquis. Metaph.*, *Opera* III, 335b (= AT VII, 294).

762 E.g. *Syntagm. Philos.* II = *Physica*, Sect. III, Membr. Post., Lib. II, Cap. 3, = *Opera* II, 235a.

763 *Syntagm. Philos.* II = *Physica*, Sect. I, Lib. VII, Cap. 7 = *Opera* I, 494a.

764 Claimed by Bouillier, *Hist. de la Phil. cart.*, I, 412 f.

765 Listed in Spink, *French Free-Thought*, 194 f.

766 On the general stance of the Jansenists, see G. Lewis, *Augustinisme et*

Cartesianism could spread most rapidly and freely—[767]a process of differentiation unfolded so quickly that Descartes could scarcely be counted on as a clearly interpretable and thus solid ally. Significantly, the main dividing line within the camp of Dutch Cartesianism runs between those primarily interested in metaphysics (thus valuing the dualism), and those focused on physics, displaying empiricist-mechanistic tendencies; among the latter, Regius is the most well-known, from whom Descartes had to distance himself.[768] How flexible Cartesianism was is shown ultimately in the efforts of Reformed theologians—who opposed both Lutheran and Catholic scholasticism—to reconcile the "properly understood" Descartes with the "properly understood" Aristotle, and to use Cartesian rationalism as a tool of religious emancipation.[769] With regard to the fate of Cartesianism in the 18th century, we must conclude this brief overview by recalling that prominent minds—despite its ambiguities—wished to see in it, under the given circumstances, a remarkable defense of core Christian positions. This holds true for Arnault,[770] but the case of Bossuet is especially interesting:[771] if he is to be called a *semicartésien*,[772] it is because, as his admonitions to anti-Cartesians like Huet show,[773] he rightly recognized the real danger as lying in the undermining of the mind.

The Cartesian dualism, however unified and consistent it may have been in its polemical, anti-scholastic intent (and precisely because of this), simultaneously gave rise to two completely opposing systems: a mechanistic and an intellectualist one. In doing so, it provided the very weapons for its own critique. One could only oppose dualism by becoming a monist—of one kind or another—and one easily arrived at monism by playing one side of Cartesianism against the other, or

cartésianisme…, 131 ff.

767 For general context, see Thijssen-Schoute, *Le cartésianisme aux Pays-Bas*, 183 ff.

768 Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, I, 260, 240 ff.

769 Bohatec, *Die cartesianische Scholastik*, esp. 19 ff., 72, 102 f., 127 ff.

770 Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, II, 156 ff.

771 Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, II, 222 ff.

772 According to an expression by Busson, *Religion des classiques*, 373, cf. 386 ff.

773 See the letter to Huet from 18.5.1689, cited in Charbonnel, *Pensée italienne*, 635 f.

suppressing one in the name of the other. But in doing so, one necessarily lost sight of both the true nature of Scholasticism and Descartes' original intention. Cartesian mechanism-materialism on the one hand, and Cartesian intellectualism on the other, were inevitably drawn into the service of the dominant, mutually opposed ideological tendencies within early modern rationalism. At the same time, both turned against Cartesianism as a whole. Yet the fact that these two could temporarily coexist within Cartesianism shows just how much contradiction was originally baked into the nature of modern rationalism. Hence the characteristic relevance of Cartesianism—and the endless dispute over it. The monistic option, which the struggle against Cartesian dualism intrinsically entailed, could just as easily manifest as pure materialism or as pure intellectualism/spiritualism. Given the negative yet structurally striking kinship between materialism and spiritualism—specifically their shared monistic foundation—it is not surprising that spiritualist positions, often unintentionally and by various detours, benefited the materialist monism, and vice versa: one merely needed to reverse the signs. Moreover, in attempting to finally overcome the opposition between mind and matter within a monist framework, the following occurred: spiritualist positions absorbed materialist elements or forms of sensuality in spiritualized guise in order to neutralize sensuality and render themselves immune to attacks from those appealing to empirical reality and science—without lapsing into an *anti-scientific* stance (extreme case of this trend: the late Regius); whereas materialists spiritualized their concept of matter by referring to the immanence of motion, etc., in order to eventually extract mind itself from its core. Spiritualization of matter and sensualization of spirit intermixed in various ways within the dominant reconciliatory trend of the 18th century, which drew on and reinterpreted ideas and motives from both directions. We'll have more to say later on the character of Enlightenment materialism. We begin with the monistic orientation of the Cambridge Platonists, which—via Newton—ultimately benefited the later strongly empiricist tendencies after having initially combated Cartesian dualism by spiritualist means. The Platonists develop their argumentative strategy on both the epistemological-anthropological and cosmological levels, which thus display a structural parallelism. On both fronts, spirit is defended

against the possible consequences of mechanism, but the concept of spirit is expanded such that, as spirit ultimately becomes the overarching principle, the monistic tendency gains the upper hand. In the epistemological-anthropological dimension, the primacy of spirit (intellect) attains such existential intensity that it merges with will and encompasses the whole human being, while in cosmology, God's undisputed sovereignty is purchased at the price of His entanglement with the world (space).

The Platonic school of Cambridge reaches maturity under the influence of mathematical natural science, although its roots lie in English humanism, which had long opposed scholasticism in the name of the "true" religion and, through its demand for personal understanding of the Bible based on immediate experiences, had helped attitudes such as the *devotio moderna* of Erasmus to articulate themselves independently.[774] The influence of Herbert of Cherbury must also not be overlooked—he sought to end the confusion of the age through a *pax universa*,[775] which in turn was to rest on an eternal and universally valid truth, whose existence he asserted against *insanos et scepticos*.[776] Herbert seeks the binding rational content or the common denominator of all religions, which he does not wish to understand as a *Durchschnitt* of empirically existing diversity, but rather to derive *ex mente nostra*:[777] the true *consensus universalis* rests on *communes notitiae* or *veritates indubiae*.[778] It is symptomatic that Grotius had already read and commented on Herbert's work in manuscript.[779] Only the concept of the mathematically graspable and formulable law of nature illustrates the meaning of the binding and unchangeable completely unambiguously. The Cambridge Platonists turn to it all the more readily because they too, under the impression of the continental religious wars and the English civil war, are in search of a firm theoretical support. Religion is to unite,[780] and for this it needs a final and universally valid clarification of its content and its relation to

774 Cassirer, *Die plat. Renaissance in England*, 8 ff.
775 *De Verit.*, 1–7, 43.
776 *De Verit.*, 8.
777 *De Verit.*, 40.
778 *De Verit.*, 38 f.
779 Herbert, *Autobiography*, 175.
780 Whidcote, *Aphorisms* No. 721 (= Cragg, 430 f.); No. 756 (= Cragg, 431).

reason, so that faith and reason are identical.[781] But not only religion—morality too can be demonstrated with mathematical certainty.[782] This is emphasized in particular, for the strong practical-moral orientation is supposed to lend religion immediately intelligible rationality and independence from dogmatic dispute: in this way, the Platonists—although their intention is initially to use modern epistemology to reformulate religious belief—[783]perhaps without knowing or intending it, contribute their share to the acceleration of the secularization process.[784] The intensity of the moral intention makes clearest the view of nature—not merely as being but also as value (i.e., as value-laden being or as ontically present value)—which was suggested by the harmony of the mathematical-natural scientific model.[785] Reason is not merely the logical-mathematical grasp of the structure of things, but their very essence. Since reason and morality are to coincide by definition, the world is morally structured in itself; the moral judgment is at the same time an ontological one, and moral behavior is the only natural behavior: "The rule of right is the reason of things; the judgement of right is the reason of our minds perceiving the reason of things".[786] The binding of ethics to an ontology, which appears here programmatically, will be pathbreaking for influential currents of the Enlightenment and in itself marks the reconnection of modern rationalism—albeit from the perspective of its own worldview assumptions—with modes of thought that also underpinned the opposed "Scholasticism" and "Theology."

This binding has an important consequence for the definition of *Ratio*—a consequence that will also bear fruit in the future and is no less programmatically announced by the Cambridge Platonists. If reason and the essence of the world or of man are identical, then reason can no longer be merely an instrument for discovering truth, but instead coincides with truth. Reason and certain assumptions are inseparable, so rationalism is fused with a specific content. And

781 Whidcote, *Aphorisms* No. 878 and 880 (= Cragg, 432).

782 More, *Ench. Eth.* I, 4 § 2 (= *Opera Phil.*, I, 18); *Dial. Div.* I (= *Opera Phil.*, I, 644); cf. Whidcote, *Aphorisms* No. 298.

783 Willey, *Seventeenth Century Background*, 125.

784 Lichtenstein, *More*, 201 ff.

785 See above, Chapter II, Section 2b.

786 Whichcote, *Aphorism* No. 33 (= Cragg, 423); cf. No. 26 (= Cragg, 422).

further: since there is no distance between reason and its object (truth), reason is the highest immediacy—or: its deepest character is necessarily *eidetic* or existential; it differs little from what Herbert of Cherbury called *instinctus naturalis* or *sensus internus*.[787] (Grotius also granted this same eidetic certainty to his reason; the rational principles of natural law were, according to him, perceptible in the same immediate way as the things of the external world.)[788] The theme of eidetic reason is emphatically stressed by all representatives of the school, always in connection with the rejection of dead letters, colorless syllogistics, dry system-thinking, etc.: the emotional philosophy of the 18th century will adopt these catchwords unchanged.[789] Not the pure heart, but the *sophistisme* mind opposes reason. For the rational is not known from without but experienced inwardly, and it is impossible to know the rational without being rational. Precisely because of this immediacy, there is no real difference between knowledge and morality. Only the good can recognize the good. As More formulates it: *"Deprehendi ... quod in unaquaqua re Optimum est ... ab hominibus non quatenus intelligentes sunt, sed quatenus boni";* the corresponding *facultas* should be called *animae oculum*.[790] J. Smith emphasizes the same, this time following Plotinus: only the sun-like eye can behold the sun—and only the god-like soul can know God.[791] These are variations on the same theme: morality and knowledge are ultimately identical and rooted in being.

The existential or *eidetic* character of reason, grounded in value-

787 *De Verit.*, 38, 75.

788 *De Iure*, Prol. § 39 (= XXI f.).

789 In his famous sermon *Before the Honourable House of Commons,* Cudworth castigates the "bookish Christians," the "dry speculations," and the "mere dead skeleton of opinions" (Cragg, 374, 380). Cudworth identifies rational insights with the "genuine instincts of nature, rightly interpreted" (*A Treatise of Freewill* = Cragg, 297). Similarly, J. Smith asserts that reason grasps fundamental truths "by a naked intuition" (*The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion*, Ch. I = Cragg, 95), and N. Culverwel likewise states that the intuitive clarity of reason contrasts with the "mudded and troubled waters in which the Schoolmen ... are always fishing" (*An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*, Ch. I = Cragg, 59).

790 *Ench. Eth.* I, 3 § 4 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 15).

791 *A Discourse Concerning the True Way or Method of Attaining Divine Knowledge*, Sect. I (= Cragg, 77 f.).

laden rational being, aims to break the boundaries of a narrowly understood intellectualism. The intellect expands and becomes reason in the enriched sense, by merging with a will that pulses existentially, bears morality within itself, and simultaneously strives for it. The soul is conceived as a unity, thus overcoming the ultimate opposition between the two fundamental faculties within psychological disciplines.[792] Clearly, the later *moral sense philosophy* is being prepared here. On the other hand, it must not be overlooked that in the thinking of the Platonists—inasmuch as it is shaped by opposition to Hobbes' sensualist psychology—the suppression of the very intellectualism employed as a counter-weapon cannot and must not be complete.[793] Thus, at this level (as also at the cosmological level, see below), the Platonists must pursue two aims simultaneously—despite the risk of logical inconsistency—namely: to enlist as much of the soul as possible in the moral service of the intellect, which remains steadfast, and to preserve the purity of these purposes from the effects of unpredictable or physically conditioned passions. More's argumentation is characteristic in this regard. In his extensive polemic against Hobbes, he attempts to expand or reinforce the anthropological foundation of morality by attributing freedom not merely to the will but to the soul as a unified substance that, thanks to innate ideas, autonomously determines the direction of its own movement; thus, the fate of freedom no longer depends on a single faculty or accident of the soul-substance, while the mutual reinforcement of intellect and will within the soul makes it independent of external influences, which it would

792 This has been well observed by Passmore, *Cudworth*, 55 f., 65 ff. His error lies in regarding this overcoming as a personal achievement of Cudworth, though it was actually a commonplace among the Platonists, arising necessarily from their own line of thought (cf. our analysis of More's argumentation in the relevant passage). The passage from Whichcote that Passmore cites on p. 53 does not show a fundamental difference from Cudworth, only a variation in perspective.

793 Willey, in his excellent analysis (*English Moralists*, 172 ff.), describes both the opposition to Hobbes as a catalyst for Platonist moral philosophy and the significance of their work for the *moral sense philosophy* (186), but fails to see the negative connection between these two aspects. The Platonists must not go too far down the path of moral sense, lest they approach a sensualism with optimistic overtones. Not coincidentally, the intellectualists of the 18th century saw in Hutcheson, for example, a masked Hobbes (see Ch. VI, Sec. 3b).

otherwise (as in Hobbes) require as motives for action.[794] Nevertheless, More does not refrain from defending freedom of the will in the traditional sense when the situation calls for it.[795] What matters here, however, is the conceptual mechanism that enables the extension of the intellect into reason without jeopardizing the spiritual purity of moral postulates. In fact, this expansion does not damage the purity of spirit because what extends or supplements the intellect also shares in the divine within the soul. The soul fully experiences its unity when it exhausts all possibilities of its essential likeness to the divine.[796] Under these circumstances, the crossing of the bounds of mere intellect does not amount to a concession to the "brutish Epicureans",[797] and within the new framework, what was originally defended through stricter intellectualism is preserved—or even further solidified—through the expansion: the spirit or the soul itself as the cradle of values. The godlike or pure soul unites with God and is also at one with itself, i.e., it fully realizes the fusion of intellect and will. Then that *boniforma facultas*, which contains the morally pure will within itself,[798] both intellectual and divine, coincides with the *recta ratio*[799] and experiences its own *intima vita ac sensibilitas* in *intellectualis amor*.[800] The term *intellectualis amor* itself indicates that what is at play here is neither a unilateral overcoming nor a renunciation of intellectualism. Rather, it is a full unfolding of all possibilities of the existentially and normatively charged intellect. Neoplatonic and theosophical borrowings make this especially clear, but it would be mistaken to attribute the conceptual shift described above exclusively to their influence: for the existential-eidetic—and normative—component no less characterizes the modern intellect, precisely as it approaches the threshold of the concept of reason or rationalism.

794 *Immort. Anim.* II, 3 §§ 7, 10 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 337, 338).

795 *Ench. Eth.* III, 1–2 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 67 ff.).

796 *Magn. Myst. Piet. Expl.*, II, 12 § 2 (= *Opera Theol.*, 89); *Antid. Ath.* I, 11 § 12 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 51).

797 This is stated by J. Smith precisely where he describes the peak of the *itinerarium mentis* (*A Discourse Concerning the True Way etc.*, Sect. II = Cragg, 90).

798 *Ench. Eth.* I, 2 § 5 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 12).

799 *Ench. Eth.* I, 5 §§ 1 and 7 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 2–4, 25).

800 *Ench. Eth.* II, 9 § 15 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 61). On this entire complex of ideas in More, see the fine analysis by Lichtenstein, *More*, esp. 41 ff., 64 ff.

The adherence to intellectualist foundational positions is evident in the epistemology of the Platonists, which in turn is meant to support their moral-philosophical views (which further clarifies the function of intellectualism in general). It is obvious that, given the assumption of the rational structure of being, the epistemology and ontology of the Platonists must go hand in hand. From the ontic character of reason follows the thesis that the logical-mathematical ideas, in which the pure rational structure of being is reflected, are innate or independent of external experience.[801] This character of reason also guarantees the absolute necessity of its ideas, the first and highest of which is the idea of God, "Archetypal and Paradigmatical to the same," as Cudworth says.[802] He considers the ontological proof of God's existence a deduction "from the Nature of Knowledge and Understanding"; the participation of imperfect spirits in the perfect one, which is also mentioned in this context, is in turn merely a paraphrase for the ontological understanding of the character of reason.[803] More, who treats the ontological proof of God in the greatest detail,[804] even ventures the claim that its rejection is tantamount to the thesis of the contingency of being altogether and thus also to the complete uselessness of the human faculty of knowledge.[805] This strong statement becomes understandable only when we keep in mind the overall context in which the ontological proof appears. If reason is rooted in *ὄν*, and thus the idea of God as the *ὄν par excellence* emerges from its very structure, then God and reason must be identical. As a counterpart to intellectualist epistemology, the binding of God to the dictates of reason reveals itself—or: the ontological proof of God, viewed according to its inner logic, appears in the perspective of its early modern functions as a consequence or complement to the assumption that logical-mathematical as well as moral laws are eternal and unchangeable, i.e. not even dependent on God's will; God cannot will anything other than the rational.[806] Divine voluntarism, upheld by

801 *More, Antid. Ath.* I, 6 §§ 3–5 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 35).
802 *True Intell. System*, 733.
803 *True Intell. System*, 731.
804 *Antid. Ath.*, I, 8 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 37 f.).
805 *Antid. Ath.*, Scholium in Cap. VIII Sect. 3 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 41, top).
806 See e.g. Cudworth's 1731 posthumously published work, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, I, 2 (= *Cragg*, 272).

Calvin and Descartes, is unacceptable to our Platonists. To separate God's will from His intellect, says Cudworth, is to destroy the deity; already in this one sees "that Cartesius was indeed but an Hypocritical Theist, or Personated and Disguised Atheist".[807]

For the Platonists, eliminating arbitrariness on the side of God meant, *eo ipso*, eliminating fatalism on the side of man. In other words: God's binding to the commandments of reason appeared to them as proof of the necessity of human freedom.[808] Also in relation to the Platonists' great polemical target—namely, the philosophy and political theory of Hobbes—the renewal of the ontological proof of God, within the overall context described, is symptomatic. For this proof is necessarily linked to an intellectualist epistemology, as Cudworth clearly recognizes, and is thus deployed precisely in the fight against Hobbes' sensualism. The danger of atheism and immoralism had already grown so great that a return to the otherwise mocked *scholasticism* had to be accepted. Cudworth combats Hobbesian epistemology not least with regard to its consequences for morality: "Were Sense the only Evidence of things, there could be no Absolute Truth and Falshood".[809] But if there is no fixed truth, the door is opened wide to arbitrariness; Cudworth—rightly—sees a connection between empiricism or nominalism and Hobbes' decisionism. He polemicizes against the *Leviathan*, which can determine morality and values sovereignly, in the same spirit as against the Calvinist or Cartesian God (which also had a historical basis, given the influence that Ockham's voluntarist God had on the construction of Hobbes' mortal God). Thus, the intellectualist theory of knowledge goes hand in hand with intellectualist morality. The *a priori* of cognition corresponds to the innate moral faculty, and both are ontologically grounded; in contrast, for the nominalist Hobbes, the opposite holds true on all levels. This multidimensional conflict once again culminates—most clearly and fundamentally—in the anthropological question. "These Atheistic Politicians ... first of all

807 *True Intell. Syst.*, 646.

808 On the polemical combination of the concepts of freedom and necessity, cf. our remarks above, Chap. II Section 2b.

809 *True Intell. Syst.*, 637. Also More emphasizes that the senses cannot convey eternal truths, see e.g. a passage directly aimed at the "Athei" in *Antid. Ath.* I, 8 § 12 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 39).

slander Humane Nature, and make a Villain of it," Cudworth states,[810] asserting, like all the Platonists,[811] the natural goodness and sociability of man. The presumed wickedness of the opponent *eo ipso* reinforces his belief that his own position must and may be the only correct one. He also remains unaware of the logical contradiction arising from the double claim that the will is free and must, due to its original constitution, choose the good.[812] The connection of freedom and necessity here is polemical, not logically cogent.

From the analysis of the existential concept of reason and the intellectualist foundational position of the Platonists, along with its consequences (*ideae innatae*, etc.), it becomes clear what they found fascinating in Descartes. Not a few representatives of the school therefore saw in Descartes the most important ally in the contemporary fight against Hobbesian materialism—[813]especially since the dualism of mind and matter was an essential component of their own Platonism or Neoplatonism. However, the reception of Descartes[814] soon faltered, or at least the attitude of the Platonists became more differentiated, albeit to varying degrees,[815] as the difficulties and dangers became apparent that were inherent in the uncompromising sharpness of Cartesian dualism. The concern of the Platonists was the opposite of that of many Enlightenment thinkers of

810 *True Intell. Syst.*, 891.

811 See the programmatic statements of Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, Nos. 42 and 678 (= *Cragg* 423, 430).

812 Cf. the excellent remarks by Mintz, *The Hunting of the Leviathan*, 132 f.

813 See Cudworth's positive evaluation of Cartesianism, *True Intell. Syst.*, 174 f.; not coincidentally, More praises Descartes' moral-philosophical treatise particularly warmly, *Immort. Anim.*, *Epist. Ded.* (= *Opera Phil.*, II, 276).

814 On this generally, see Lamprecht, *The Role of Descartes...*, 181 ff., and Nicolson, *The Early Stage of Cartesianism...*, 356 ff. Also Laird, *L'influence de Descartes*, esp. 234 ff.

815 It seems that J. Smith, who especially valued the moral-philosophical merits of Cartesian dualism due to his own interests, remained overall more faithful to Descartes than did Cudworth and More, who also dealt extensively with cosmological questions. Cartesian mechanism appears to promote, for Smith, the elevation of the soul to the source of its own divinity, while More's rejection of it seems to coincide with a distancing from mystical experience. See the interesting study by J. Saveson, *Differing Reactions to Descartes...*, esp. 561, 564 f., 566.

the 18th century: the latter feared a devaluation of matter that, under the pressure of the nihilism charge, would undo the anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality; the former, on the other hand, could not approve of the autonomization of matter implied by Cartesian mechanism, which stood in the way of its influence by the spirit. These opposing intentions nonetheless both led to a strengthening of monism —though with differing emphases. Precisely in order to defend dualism in the sense of the sovereign independence of spirit, Cudworth, for example, seeks to effectively eliminate the corporeal. But the price of this project is that the concept of spirit, in its boundless expansion, loses its specific contours and thus can no longer properly fulfill its actual metaphysical-normative function. In place of the dualism of spirit and body there silently arises a dualism of active and passive—which in turn means that spirit can no longer be defined as sharply or purely by its opposition to body.[816]

The attempt to eliminate the possible consequences of Cartesian mechanism was linked with the aforementioned rejection of divine voluntarism by the Platonists. As we know, in Descartes the primacy of the divine will served to eradicate teleology from the course of nature. Cudworth does not explicitly know this connection in Descartes, but by force of the inner logic of things, he argues as though he were fully aware of it. Out of fear of a meaningless world and the specter of nihilism, and convinced that the "Mechanick or Atomick Theists" ultimately play into the hands of the atheists,[817] he combats Cartesian mechanism not least by—forgetting in this emergency his battle against Scholasticism—taking up the teleological idea with a solid batch of Aristotelian quotations. The "Plastic Nature" (i.e., formative nature) "acts ἕνεκὰ του, for the sake of something, and in order to Ends";[818] it is the "immediate Agent and Executioner" of the divine law, whose activity renders God's intervention in all events and affairs

816 According to Passmore, *Cudworth*, 23 (cf. 28, 65). Although Passmore summarizes well the main difference between Descartes and Cudworth at this point, he generally tends to downplay the significance of Cudworth's anti-Cartesian polemic (cf. e.g. p. 8). For this, see the critical remarks by Sailor, *Cudworth and Descartes*, 135 ff.

817 *True Intell. Syst.*, 683 f.

818 *True Intell. Syst.*, 147; in the course of the polemic against mechanism, the theory of the animal-machine is also rejected (863, 167).

of this world unnecessary. Plastic Nature can act teleologically and represent God precisely because it acts according to immutable laws, and therefore need not ask God in each individual case how to proceed in accordance with His will. God is relieved of the daily running of the world in order to emphasize His entirely rational rather than voluntaristic nature. Through this thesis, the Platonists of Cambridge pave the way for Enlightenment deism. However, Cudworth's religious concern also makes him more sensitive to the kinship between deism and mechanism. God's activity is not exhausted by the Plastic Nature; this takes care only of "that which consists in the regular and orderly motion of matter," but beyond this, there exists "a higher providence," which corrects the errors of mechanism and occasionally even bypasses them.[819] The well-meaning Cudworth wants to have it both ways: God must stay out of the picture so that reason and law are not undermined, yet He must also intervene if necessary, for the sake of the higher purposiveness of the world and the rational limitation of mechanism. And Cudworth wants to claim a third thing as well: that God, despite all non-intervention, is present everywhere and in everything; this presence is even what enables the operations of nature, which must therefore ultimately be something other than pure mechanism: "But as God is inward to every thing, so Nature acts immediately upon the Matter, as an Inward and Living Soul or Law in it";[820] at this point, understandably, Plotinus is cited.[821]

What matters here is not the logical leaps through which Cudworth arrives at his position, but rather the fact that in this rejection of mechanism, atheism, or immoralism, a rapprochement of God to the world—or of spirit to matter—ultimately occurs. The introduction of the teleological idea, or the defense of the meaningfulness of things and of the world, plays a decisive role. Henry More, whose attacks against mechanism Cudworth gratefully acknowledges,[822] held on to the teleological idea for the same reasons and linked it to his conception of the *Spiritus Naturae*, which

819 *True Intell. Syst.*, 150.

820 *True Intell. Syst.*, 156.

821 On the Plotinian precedents of the "Plastic Nature," see Cassirer, *Die Plat. Renaissance*, 95 ff.

822 *True Intell. Syst.*, 148.

corresponds to Cudworth's "Plastic Nature"[823] and takes over or shelters the functions of the *substantial forms*.[824] On this basis, he develops a *physicotheology* that anticipates all the major themes of the vast literature on the subject in the 18th century.[825] The natural philosophy of the Renaissance remains alive in More, as in all the Cambridge Platonists, and expresses itself in the emphasis on the vital against the merely mechanical (these are the terms More uses, particularly when he discusses the *Spiritus Naturae*). Often, via the route of Plotinian emanationism,[826] a picture is painted of a powerful unity of the world, though one that stands under the sign of spirit. Although matter can be neither *finis* nor *principium* of itself[827] and receives its motion from spirit,[828] it nonetheless also springs from the divine source of all life.[829] To counter the dualism or Manichaeism that also lurked in his own Plotinian heritage, More rejects as *sophisma* the Cartesian claim of the substantial independence of matter.[830] Within a monistic perspective, he seeks to explain how the influence of spirit on matter—and thus the overcoming of mechanism and atheism—is possible. And since within Cartesian dualism spirit seems unable to access matter, More thinks he can solve the problem by reducing everything that exists—whether independently or dependently—to a common denominator. He arrives at this relatively simply, by

823 See the definition of *Spiritus Naturae* in *Enchir. Metaph.*, Cap. 28, Schol. (= *Opera Phil.* I, 329); cf. *Immort. Anim.* III, 12 §1 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 430). The idea of the *Spiritus Naturae* can already be found as an echo of various, then-common vitalist views ("spermaticall power") in More's early work, but it is significantly only gradually developed—especially after the correspondence and partial break with Descartes (1648). On this, see Greene, *More and Boyle on the Spirit of Nature*, esp. 453 f., 459 f. Greene aptly notes (461) that this *Spiritus Naturae* is essentially "a catch-all for the inexplicable."

824 *Philosoph. de Principiis* §17 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 348).

825 See the entire Book II of *Antidotus adv. Atheismum* (= *Opera Phil.* II, 43 ff.); it does not lack for colorful touches, for example when Chapter 4 claims that seawater was created by God with regard to the needs of navigation.

826 Hutin rightly observes (*More*, 80) that the Christian concept of creation in the strict sense is absent in More.

827 *Ench. Metaph.* 9 §11 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 176).

828 *Ench. Metaph.* 10 §16 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 182).

829 *Immort. Anim.* II, 11 §10 (= *Opera Phil.* II, 363).

830 *Ench. Metaph.* 9 §10 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 175 f.).

polemically reworking the opposing position. To the Cartesian equation *matter = extension*, he counters with the equation *spirit = extension*,[831] and since he acknowledges both the extendedness of matter and the existence of spirit, he arrives at the equation *existence = extension*. This can be seen partly as an inversion and partly as an expansion of a Hobbesian epigram, namely that only (extended) bodies can be real components of the universe.[832] More, moreover, explicitly affirms his agreement with the thesis *quidquid est alicubi est etiam extensum*, and he regards this agreement as the best starting point for refuting the opposing position.[833]

The difference between spirit and matter thus no longer lies in the attribute of extension but arises from certain properties of the latter, such as divisibility and impenetrability.[834] Through this view, More believes he has achieved two things. On the one hand, matter's independence appears abolished, since its sole substantial attribute—extension—has been taken from it, i.e., equally granted to spirit; matter can thus no longer play the antagonist to spirit—through its desubstantialization or spiritualization, it is rendered harmless. On the other hand, More sees in the extendedness of spirit the best hypothesis for explaining its interpenetration with matter—and he no longer fears such interpenetration, since spirit, after matter has been desubstantialized, becomes the overarching principle. What is of interest here is the structural parallelism between the anthropological and cosmological levels in More's thinking. Since God "in suo modo extenditur" and is "omnipraesens," He is able to instill motion into matter; and only because the soul "universum corpus pervadat" is the motion of the latter explicable.[835] Spirit and matter have thus drawn so close to one another that More feels empowered to describe the Cartesian fundamental division as a violation of the rules of logical thinking: the mere difference of some attributes can neither justify "Separabilitatem" nor "realem Distinctionem"—one must not "Diversa

831 *Ench. Metaph.*, Chapters 6 and 7 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 158 ff.).

832 *Lev.* XXXIV (= *EW*, III, 380).

833 *Ench. Metaph.* Chapter 27, final sentence of the second and first sentence of the third paragraph.

834 *Ench. Metaph.* 27 §5 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 318 f.).

835 See the first and second letters to Descartes, *Opera Phil.* II, 234 and 248; both levels are simultaneously addressed in *Ench. Metaph.* (see previous note).

cum Oppositis confundere".[836] This far-reaching homogeneity is silently presupposed as the condition for mutual influence.[837] More proceeds in this with a clear conscience: since spirit is by definition more comprehensive than matter, and now also possesses extension, the likewise extended matter is absorbed into or encompassed by spirit. But More does not consider that this victory of the spiritual principle has been won at a high price; he does not ask to what extent the character of spirit remains intact if it is precisely that attribute—extension—assigned exclusively to matter by the opposing position, that is now attributed to spirit. Since spirit has no Achilles' heel, he assumes it cannot be compromised by this. That the spiritualization of the material under certain circumstances must result in the sensualization of the spiritual—this he does not grasp. And indeed, he could not have known what would become the dominant trend in the intellectual life of the coming century.

Just as in Descartes the sharp separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* led to the identification of matter and extension, so in More's mediation between spirit and matter—however spiritualistic it may have been intended—a dissociation of the concept of matter from that of extension had to result; matter remains extended, but it is no longer the only extended thing, and therefore its necessary connection to the concept of extension ceases. It is this seemingly paradoxical and yet entirely logical consequence that More's critique aimed at. Now that matter and extension diverge, and since spirit too is extended—and spirit, by definition, represents the overarching principle—matter can exist only within a space that exists independently of it, an eternal and infinite space that, given these attributes, obviously coincides with God.[838] In Descartes, the identification of matter and extension led to the rejection of the vacuum; in More, their separation had to lead to a revival of atomistic theory (More explicitly appeals to Democritus and

836 *Ench. Metaph.* 27 §4 (= *Opera Phil.* I, 318).

837 The same point was later asserted at the epistemological level: cognition would be impossible if there were no substantial commonality between subject and object, i.e., between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The central role of this issue in the debates of S. Foucher with Malebranche and orthodox Cartesians, and the opponents' recourse to scholastic concepts, is well presented by Watson, *The Downfall of Cartesianism*, esp. 35 f., 60.

838 *Ench. Metaph.* 8 §§8–9 (= *Opera Philos.* I, 167 f.).

Epicurus as well as to Proclus' conception of space),[839] though in this case the former vacuum is nothing other than God-as-space. The danger of identifying God and the world—that is, Spinozism—[840] More tried to escape in a later phase of his thought by describing space as infinite and the world as finite. The world, then, is an island in the sea of space—[841]or even the body of God's body Because of the sharpness of Cartesian dualism, the situation had become so delicate that even the slightest attempt to overcome it had to raise fundamental questions. This is illustrated especially clearly in the case of the cautious and conservative Malebranche, who, from the conjecture that the separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* might apply only in the realm of natural explanation, had to draw the consequence that God includes within himself all the perfections of both spirits and matter.[842] It is also known that students of Malebranche, such as Fénelon, felt drawn toward Spinozism.[843]

The Cambridge Platonists emphasized the existential component of the concept of reason and thereby contributed to the emergence of *moral sense philosophy* and to the strengthening of anti-intellectualist currents. Just as in cosmology, they also achieved effects in epistemology and moral philosophy that scarcely aligned with their own intentions. This was due not least to their anti-Cartesian zeal—a zeal shared even by less devout minds. But the *heterogony of ends* also affected other anti-Cartesian lines of thought. In their case, it was no longer a matter of an unintended or long-term undermining of intellectualism, as in the case of the Platonists, but rather of its programmatic rejection—initially tied to religious aims, but ultimately serving, by various detours, empiricism or sensualism, and thus also anti-religious positions. The reference here is to that turn toward the

839 *Ench. Metaph.* 8 §3 and its Scholium (= *Opera Phil.* I, 166, 169 f.).

840 Precisely the objective proximity of his position to Spinozism compels More to take up a particularly sharp polemic against it. See Colie, *Light and Enlightenment*, 73 ff., esp. 83–85.

841 Later, Raphson would draw on such arguments to defend his deification of space against the suspicion of Spinozism. He also accused Spinoza of accepting only the Cartesian identification of space with matter, not the identification of space with God. See Koyré, *Von der geschlossenen Welt ...*, Chap. VIII.

842 *Recherche de la vérité*, Book III Part II, Chapter IX, §IV (= *OC*, I, 472 f.).

843 Bouillier, *Hist. de la phil. cart.*, II, 348 ff.

immediacy of feeling, understood as a way out of the dilemma: (cerebral) mechanistic-atheistic science or (equally cerebral) scholasticism. Thus Pascal exalted heart and feeling over intellect to combat latent Cartesian atheism or the hubris of the intellect.[844] Feeling, he claimed, is the decisive, existentially overarching authority: "*Tout notre raisonnement se réduit à céder au sentiment*".[845] It fulfills not only moral-metaphysical but also epistemological functions, for it, not the intellect, illuminates the first principles from which the intellect then derives its propositions.[846] Pascal thereby does nothing other than reassign the essence of Cartesian intuition no longer to the intellect but to feeling. Yet this elevates inner sense or experience in its existential dynamism. Later religious currents—such as *Piétisme*, etc.—point in the same direction. They support the philosophy of feeling just as empiricism does. Thus empiricism, despite its inherent skepticism, collaborates with these devout movements against intellectualism. The differences between the two are unmistakable; all the more striking, then, is this shared consequence.

844 *Pensées*, Sect. II Nos. 77–79 (= *Œuvres* XII, 98 f.).
845 *Pensées*, Sect. IV No. 274 (= *Œuvres* XIII, 199).
846 *Pensées*, Sect. IV No. 282 (= *Œuvres* XIII, 203 f.).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Ontological Elevation of Matter and the Simultaneous Elimination of Intellectualism and Mechanicism

1. General Remarks

The preceding account of the philosophical or intellectualist foundation of mechanistic natural science by Descartes, as well as the early questioning of Cartesian dualism by monistic positions, has brought us—both logically and chronologically—to the threshold of the Enlightenment era, and thus also to the core point of our analysis. What follows is an account of the process of the radical rehabilitation of sensuality, which—philosophically speaking—is grounded in the ontological elevation of matter and makes itself felt on all levels of intellectual endeavor in various, yet structurally interconnected, forms. In the language of our central systematic question—which we shall keep constantly in view—the general situation may be described as follows: during the Enlightenment, the mind suffered, all in all, a serious defeat in its struggle with sensuality and matter. It is increasingly seen in its dependence on, indeed rootedness in, matter, while conversely the emancipation of matter proceeds unceasingly: matter is increasingly viewed, in other words, as an autonomous bearer of motion, such that a first mover (in the sense of mechanistic and even more of Aristotelian natural science) gradually becomes de facto superfluous. Given the assumed relations between divine and human mind in traditional metaphysics, it was inevitable that the degradation of the mind as such would occur not only in cosmological-theological, but also simultaneously in anthropological and social-theoretical terms. Thus, in view of the still largely self-evident sense—shared by friend and foe alike—of the shared fate of value and mind,

the question of norms became increasingly fraught. These striking interconnections allow us to discern, in the sprawling and contradictory process of the ontological elevation and emancipation of matter, the red thread for a conceptual reconstruction of the Enlightenment. To clarify this point for now, it may suffice to point to a particularly telling statement by a materialist. All proofs of God's existence, writes d'Holbach, rest on the false principle "que la matière n'existe point par elle-même et se trouve par sa nature dans l'impossibilité de se mouvoir"; theology derives the idea of God by personifying the "principe de la mobilité inhérent à la matière".[847] From this, the essential point becomes clear: the ontological elevation or emancipation of matter must mean the death of God and of spirit altogether. The consistent opponents of materialism, as is well known, completely shared this assessment of the situation, though they tended to draw entirely different conclusions from it.

Extreme positions can encapsulate the quintessence of complex developments, and, when they do so, they serve excellently as a hermeneutic guide. Nevertheless, a reality-oriented interpretation must not forget that the level of interpretation does not coincide with that of reality. Applied to the Enlightenment, this concretely means that orienting one's analysis around those intellectual-historical phenomena which particularly vividly illustrate the tendency toward the ontological elevation of matter does not at all imply their numerical predominance. On the other hand, it is a fatal methodological and substantive error to infer intellectual-historical ineffectiveness from statistical marginality.[848] Ideas exert influence just as much negatively as positively, just as much when they are extensively rejected as when they are simply adopted. If Enlightenment materialism remained

847 *Syst. de la Nature*, II, 142.

848 This reveals a fundamental shortcoming in Cassirer's work, who views figures like La Mettrie and d'Holbach merely as "isolated phenomena" "without typical significance" (*Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 73). In doing so, he aims for a unified concept of the Enlightenment, but disables himself from explaining phenomena such as the emergence of a programmatic nihilism precisely in the 18th century. He also must remain silent on the conflict between causal and normative thinking, or the oscillation between pessimism and optimism (cf. Chapter VI)—i.e., core aspects of the Enlightenment—precisely because he refuses to acknowledge the function of materialist tendencies (cf. also note 5 below).

statistically a fringe phenomenon, it nevertheless embodied the ultimate consequences of the emerging ontological elevation of matter in their purest form. This is made abundantly clear not only in the polemics of contemporary defenders of the theological worldview, but also in the attitude of the non-materialist Enlighteners themselves: precisely because the ultimate consequences of the rehabilitation of sensuality had become visible despite the numerical insignificance of its representatives, and out of fear of the charge of nihilism or for tactical-polemical reasons, they take refuge in ambivalent dualistic constructions. But this is no longer the programmatic Cartesian dualism, but rather a dualism of wavering: one does not want to entirely renounce the elevation of matter in the struggle against theology, yet cannot push this elevation too far without endangering the fate of norm and spirit. The fundamental difference between this dualism and the Cartesian one must be kept in mind when in the following chapters the term "dualism of the Enlightenment" is used. The Enlightenment dualism of wavering, which is often merely a repressed or cowardly monism, constitutes the position into which many typical Enlighteners were pushed by the emerging materialism —and this alone suffices as proof of the latter's effect, even if this effect is often felt only indirectly, that is, as an influence on the non-materialist Enlighteners via the accusations and complaints of conservatives. It is telling for this constellation that in France, where the rehabilitation of sensuality for specific reasons took the most radical forms, the heyday of the Enlightenment lies between the appearance of the works of La Mettrie and d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*, while during precisely the same period not only does the overall moderate or dualistic movement of the Encyclopédistes unfold, but also the Christian apologetics of the century reaches its peak in both quantity and intensity.[849]

From this nuanced perspective, we have no need to replace the "century of Newton," as it was called by contemporaries and historians, with a "century of materialism" in order to do justice to the fact of the ontological elevation of matter. However, in light of this fact, we must more precisely determine what Newton's actual impact consisted in—or what was perceived as Newtonianism at various times. What is at issue here is not interpretation, but reinterpretations

849 Monod, *De Pascal à Chateaubriand…*, Chapters VIII and X.

of Newton, whose very diversity suggests the necessity of substantive differentiation when one speaks of the "century of Newton." If one wants, from the standpoint of a certain understanding of natural science, to propose a corresponding methodological ideal as the intellectual form of the Enlightenment as such, then one must either omit a great deal from that era or force it onto the Procrustean bed.[850] Recent research has rightly set aside the monochrome image of the "scientist" Newton and is now asking, not least, about the general worldview presuppositions and sources of influence behind his work.[851] Yet the correct path is not always the simplest one, and thus anyone who wishes to pursue it in this case is faced with a host of demands. Since a straightforward influence of a Newton reduced to simple rules can no longer be considered, analysis must proceed on multiple levels simultaneously: on the level of what Newton said or implied; of what could be suggested by his words without corresponding to his personal intentions; and of what was more or less freely attributed to him or presented as a logically legitimate further development of his methodological and substantive theses. In this way it becomes more understandable why Newton, in the minds of most (fully or semi-) educated people, could appear as a representative of the anti-Cartesian tendency of the age—and beyond that, even unintentionally help promote the ontological elevation of matter.

850 The greatest and most incurable flaw in Cassirer's analysis lies in this approach. Cassirer defines the methodological ideal supposedly championed by Newton in such a way (*Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 8 f.) that one could just as easily attribute it to Galileo. The specificity of Newton's influence—and hence also the specificity of the Enlightenment—thus remains unexplained. Furthermore, Cassirer is not even able to use Newton's methodological ideal, which is supposed to govern Enlightenment thought, as a consistent interpretative guide (whether good or bad) across all the intellectual domains he examines (cf. Wagner's insightful comments in *Newton*, 40 f.).

851 This turn of phrase is rightly emphasized by P. Casini in his literature review: *Le "Newtonianisme" au siècle des lumières*, especially pp. 141 f., 151.

2. Newton's Anti-Cartesian Approach in its Ideological Impact

a) Sources and implications of the decoupling of matter and extension and of the transition from mechanics to dynamics. The magic of attraction

More's critique of Descartes, as we know, ultimately aimed at the factual interweaving of God and space—precisely in the effort to disentangle matter and extension. This occurred in the struggle against the presumed atheistic consequences of mechanism, and we may take it as a given that Newton fully shared More's concerns in this regard; indeed, already in notes from his student years, More's influence emerges most clearly where the functionality of the mechanism without any involvement of spirit is denied.[852] If we summarize the main points of More's critique of Descartes, we can broadly outline Newton's intellectual starting point.[853] But if we want to further grasp the full intellectual-historical constellation—particularly in order to better understand the later Cartesian critique of what they branded as Newton's regression into the suspect mysticism of pre-mechanistic natural philosophy—we must recall More's borrowings from that earlier tradition. It is, in fact, highly probable that More's conception of space developed under the influence of the hermetic–kabbalistic tradition, in which the interrelation of God and space was already present and had been taken up anew by thinkers like Patrizzi.[854] From our perspective, it is irrelevant to what extent Newton himself was familiar with these currents; through More, they entered his intellectual world in any case. Although Newton—as we shall still see in this section—made purely mathematical-physical use of the concept of absolute space, this says nothing about the origin of that concept, which appears in Newton's work from the outset in the closest connection with theological and ideological considerations.

Keeping in mind the apparent paradox that the rapprochement of mind and matter is the precondition for the separation of matter and

852 Westfall, *Force*, 337.

853 This is done succinctly by Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, 89 f.

854 Fierz, *On the Origin...*, esp. 77 ff., 82, 85 ff

space (in reality, it is merely a direct polemical inversion of the two sides of Cartesian dualism), we better understand the path that led Newton to More. Newton needs absolute space, but as long as space and matter are identical, he cannot arrive at it without equating God and matter—and thus ending up in Spinozism. This he wishes to avoid, which is why he attempts to separate space and matter by way of reconciling mind and matter. This conceptual configuration becomes especially evident in an early draft by Newton.[855] As Newton explains in the very first paragraphs, determining the motion of a body in relation to space and not merely in relation to the position of other bodies is only possible if one assumes that space and body are distinct (*spatium a corpore distinctum dari*).[856] The Cartesian determination of the motion of a body only in relation to others gives the impression that motion as such is a product of our imagination.[857] (The connection between this new conception of space and this definition of motion is further explained a few pages later.)[858] Subsequently, Newton describes the difficulties into which Cartesianism falls in interpreting specific physical and astronomical phenomena due to this stance on the question of motion, and then he attempts a fundamental definition of space. Newton does not wish to call it a substance outright, as he would not want to endanger the substantial independence of God so directly. Rather, it is that space emanates from God, the sole true substance; according to Newton, the concept of substance includes certain "actiones," "quales sunt cogitationes in mente et motus in corpore." Nonetheless, he cannot accept the thesis that space is merely an accident—"et multo minus dicitur nihil"; therefore, it must necessarily be stated that space "ad naturam substantiae magis accedit.[859]" Neither mind nor matter can exist outside of space, only that the mind—as God—is present everywhere, while bodies occupy specific parts of space.[860] In this way, Newton—despite the aforementioned theological reservation—arrives at the same equation

855 *De Gravitatione et Aequipondio Fluidorum*, in *Newton's Unpublished Scientific Papers*, 89 ff.
856 loc. cit., 91 f.
857 loc. cit., 93.
858 loc. cit., 104.
859 loc. cit., 99.
860 loc. cit., 103.

as More: mind = extension, through which space and matter are to be fundamentally separated. For Newton says that it is precisely because of His presence in space that God has the ability to keep certain parts of it free of matter.[861] Decisive here is the parallel—used again in his major works—[862]between God and man, which Newton draws with regard to the bond between the spiritual and the material. Just as man can move his own body at will, so too can God move bodies within space and keep parts of it empty.[863] The analogy between divine and human faculties is, Newton claims, greater than what philosophers have hitherto asserted; man, after all, was created in the image of God. Here, like More, Newton asserts the bond between mind and body in a spiritualist way: just as God as spirit contains all bodies within Himself, so it is conceivable that man, as a spirit made in the image of God, contains his own body within himself: "mens creata (euro sit imago Dei) est naturae longe nobilioris quam corpus ut forsan eminenter in se contineat.[864]" Nevertheless, Newton holds fast to the substantial connection between mind and body: "non possumus scientes affirmare quod mens et corpus substantialiter differunt. Vel si differunt, non possumus aliquod unionis fundamentum deprehendere.[865]" Were this necessary connection between mind and body not to exist, Newton suggests, atheism would be at the door; for God could not create extension if He did not originally contain it within Himself. Assuming extension is originally contained in mind, it would follow that both "corpora cogitare" and "res cogitantes extendi" are possible.[866] Unsurprisingly, this direct projection of the divine into the human and vice versa culminates in a few formulations tinged with pantheism: "Deus non minus substat creaturis quam ipsae substant accidentibus etc.[867]" In the *Scholium Generale* it will be said:

861 loc. cit., 106.
862 *Principia*, General Scholium (= II, 762); *Optics* III, Query 31 (= *Opera* IV, 262 f.). In the latter, the parallel is used to support the thesis that the world is not the body of God.
863 *De Gravitatione*, loc. cit., 105.
864 loc. cit., 108.
865 loc. cit., 110.
866 loc. cit., 109.
867 loc. cit., 110.

"Omnipraesens est non per virtutem solam, sed etiam per substantiam.[868]"

More had, as we saw, employed or reworked Hobbesian formulas when he ascribed extension to the mind. Newton likewise adopts the thesis that whatever is not in space cannot exist at all, from which he concludes the belonging-together of space and primal being.[869] Newton's definitions of place, body, rest, and motion also recall Hobbes, and these in turn clearly imply the separation of matter and extension.[870] The concept of force—specifically as "motus et quietis causale principium"—[871]emerges precisely in the context of the dissociation of matter and extension, and its intellectual-historical impact lies in reinforcing the already ongoing rapprochement of mind and matter. This becomes easier to understand if we recall the structure of the Cartesian counterposition, where the identification of matter with *res extensa* was paired with the identification of force with the quantity of motion, and thus with the thesis of the indifference of matter to motion—or, put differently, with the idea that motion had purely mechanical causes.[872] Nevertheless, the very same dissociation of matter and *res extensa*, which strikes at the heart of Cartesian mechanics, simultaneously necessitates the acceptance of a vacuum and atomism.[873] For Newton's overall position—that is, for the character of his synthesis—his basic affirmation of contemporary corpuscular philosophy is decisive. What separated him from it, however, was his recourse to pre-mechanistic thought. This recourse occurs, however, through deeper engagement with physical questions, specifically through the development of the dissociation of matter and extension into a dynamic conception. The conviction that matter is something other than—or something more than—extension first

868 *Principia* II, 762.

869 *De Gravitatione*, loc. cit., 103. In connection with More and the Neoplatonic-Hermetic tradition, Newton regards matter as a lower kind of being. Although space and matter are semantically correlated, space is in fact a precondition of matter. See McGuire, *Body and Void...*, 227 f., 233.

870 loc. cit., 91. Cf. Hobbes, *De Corpore* VIII §§1 and 11; VI §6 (= OL I, 91, 98, 62 f.).

871 loc. cit., 114; cf. *Principia*, Definition VIII, Scholium (= I, 53 top).

872 Descartes elaborates this connection in *Le Monde* VI–VII (= AT XI, 35 ff.).

873 *Principia*, Book III, Rule III (= II, 554); *Optics* III, Query 28, 3 (= *Opera* IV, 237, 251, 260).

shapes the fundamental definition of mass via volume and density.[874] This definition aims to answer a question that poses serious difficulty for Cartesian reduction of matter to mere extension: why can two geometrically identical bodies behave differently under identical conditions? It also seeks to explain the differing responses of bodies to the law of inertia, in the process formulating the principle of matter's innate resistance.[875] Descartes had to deny this latter principle, since the purely geometric nature of matter rendered it a mere recipient of motion; a body comes to rest not because of resistance encountered, but because it has imparted its own motion to another.[876] Through Newton's definition of mass, however, the body gains *vis inertiae* in a new sense, in addition to its geometrical properties; force and mass become correlative terms.[877] The foundation of dynamics required the assumption of an activity inherent to matter itself, in the paradoxical form of an activity in passivity: resistance is, in another sense, impetus, writes Newton.[878] At the very least, Cartesian indifference of matter toward motion had to be abandoned.[879] A small anticipatory reference to materially oriented thinkers may clarify the long-term impact of this step. To prove the ontological inherence of motion in matter, Toland, among others, invokes the argument that matter's resistance is itself proof that it is never at rest.[880] Diderot adopts the same idea and develops it further: resistance, he writes, is "*déjà une force, une action propre et intime*.[881]"

Newton considered his view of the resistance and density of matter to be foundational to his natural philosophy.[882] His definition of mass—together with the observation that a body's weight changes with its distance from the Earth's center—made possible, in principle, the formulation of the law of gravitation. This allowed him to consolidate a dynamic conception on a broad basis; alongside the

874 *Principia*, Definition I (= I, 39).
875 *Principia*, Definition III (= I, 40 f.).
876 *Le Monde* VII (= AT XI, 42).
877 Burtt, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 239.
878 *Principia*, Definition III (= I, 41).
879 On this generally, see Herivel, *The Background of Newton's Principia*, 315 ff.
880 *Letters*, V §19 (= p. 198).
881 *Principes Philosophiques sur la Matière et le Mouvement* = OC II, 69.
882 *Principia*, Book III, beginning (= II, 549).

passive forces of *vis inertiae*, the "active principles," above all gravity, now came into play.[883] These action-at-a-distance forces are the new principle that Newton introduces into the world of vacuum and corpuscles in order to transition kinetic atomism into a dynamic theory.[884] The vacuum is defended against Descartes only to be filled anew—this time with forces. This did not only affect Descartes, but mechanistic philosophy as a whole. In corpuscular philosophy, the moving particle serves as the ultimate explanatory principle, but in Newton—whose physical reality likewise consists of moving corpuscles—this role is instead assumed by the force of attraction that determines their motion.[885] Newton remains a mechanist, and yet he significantly contributes to undermining mechanism by exempting gravity—his highest physical principle—from mechanistic explanation. However, this was closely linked to a direct threat to mechanism itself, by way of the implicit revival of the hermetic doctrine of sympathy and antipathy among bodies, well known in Renaissance natural philosophy; clearly distinguishing gravity from such notions was no easy task. At this point, the greatest pride of mechanistic natural philosophy was at risk: the unified interpretation of bodily motion and natural phenomena in general, based on the assumption of a uniformly constituted matter differentiated only by size and shape. Yet this conception of matter could not satisfactorily explain the specific tendency of one body to attract or repel another specific body. Thus, when the principle of attraction is applied consistently, the possibility arises that the unity of mechanistic nature might dissolve into a plurality of matter types, each with its own laws. But Newton preserves—this being a key feature of his synthesis that will prove important in the 18th century—the core insight of mechanism at the very moment of his greatest deviation from it. That is: he treats the force of attraction, which derives from pre-mechanistic thought, with the mathematico-quantitative tools of mechanism—or in other words, he applies the mathematical methodology of mechanism to a dynamic that in itself overcomes traditional mechanics. Thanks to

883 On the complementing of inertia by active forces, see the formulation in *Optics* III, Query 31 (= *Opera* IV, 260 f.). For the terminological definition of gravity, see *Principia*, Book III, Proposition V, Scholium (= II, 571).
884 Lasswitz, *History of the Atomism*, II, 555, 571.
885 Westfall, *Force*, 377 f.

the universality of the law of gravitation, gravity ceases to be a *causa occulta* (i.e., a special explanatory principle for particular cases).[886] Newton explicitly opposes "occult qualities" with "general laws of nature.[887]" But this universality of gravitational effect—required for its mathematical treatment and quantifiability—also presupposes the existence of a unified, universal medium, a comprehensive spatial domain for the operation of all action-at-a-distance forces. It is precisely here that the later Newton reconnects with his earlier writings in the *De Gravitatione* draft, which stood under the influence of More's conception of space.[888] More's refutation of the Cartesian identification of matter and extension had led, as with Newton, to a reintroduction of the vacuum, which he labeled a *substantia immaterialis.*[889] Newton, too, posits an immaterial substance or ether as the unified, universal medium that enables the mathematico-quantitative treatment of gravity, and thereby the continuation of the mechanistic approach despite drawing on hermetic traditions.[890] Furthermore, his absolute space automatically becomes a mathematical space—i.e., one in which purely mathematically graspable motions are possible, which can then serve as models for analyzing empirically observed motions in relative space.[891] Only in absolute space, or with reference to absolute motion, does the full significance of the concept of force become clear, Newton says.[892] Thus, absolute space supports both mathematical and dynamic analysis. In Newton's framework, the concepts of force, absolute motion, and absolute space can be derived from one another.[893]

Newton, as is well known, wavered between a conception of the ether as material and as immaterial. His adherence to the concept of the ether—especially in its material form, and notably after

886 Lasswitz, *History of the Atomism*, II, 578 f.; Westfall, *Force*, 466.

887 *Optics* III, Query 31 (= *Opera* IV, 260 f.).

888 McGuire, *Body and Void...*, 227 n. 74, reasonably suspects a specific influence of the *Divini Dialogi* by More on this conception of Newton's.

889 *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* I, 8 (= *Opera Philosophica* I, 166 ff.).

890 On the full complex, see Westfall's analysis in *Force*, 386 ff.

891 Rabinowitz, *Absolute Space...*, 280 f.

892 *Principia*, Definition VIII, Scholium (= I, 50 f.).

893 On the logical difficulties of this deduction, see Burtt, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 251, 254 ff.

formulating the theses of the *De Gravitatione* draft—is understandable in light of the fact that for his contemporaries, whether Cartesians or Aristotelians, *actio in distans* was the scandal *par excellence*. The material ether conception is elaborated in the letter to Oldenburg dated 21 December 1675[894] and especially in the letter to Boyle of 28 February 1678.[895] In the third letter to Bentley, the question is left open,[896] although a shift in the author's position is clearly visible here. It is no coincidence that this shift emerges in a correspondence sparked by concerns over the religious consequences of Newtonian physics. Also not by chance, the rejection of the material ether is emphasized particularly in Newton's polemic against Cartesian physics—a polemic that becomes increasingly fundamental the more Newton focuses on its theological implications.[897] Thus, Newton declares in the *Optics* that the "heavens" are "void of all sensible matter.[898]" In his effort to reconcile vacuum and etheric medium, however, he entangles himself in considerable difficulties,[899] and in the end, as has rightly been noted, assigns the latter "a most improbable structure.[900]" Yet the motivation and direction of his thinking are clear. Characteristically, it is Newton's more religiously inclined allies—such as Clarke[901] and Bentley—[902]who endeavor to do away with the (material) ether, while R. Cotes, in his preface to the second edition of the *Principia*,[903] draws attention to the danger of atheism for those "so *dediti materiae*" that they refuse to accept a vacuum. If suspicion of atheism played a major role in debates over the causes of gravity,[904] the same applies to the related

894 *Opera* IV, 379 f.
895 *Opera* IV, 385 ff.
896 *Opera* IV, 438.
897 So Rosenberger, *Newton*, 344 f.
898 *Optics* III, Query 28 (= *Opera* IV, 234).
899 McGuire, *Body and Void...*, 213, 231.
900 Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, 161
901 In his Latin translation of the passage: "What is there in places almost empty of matter and whence is it that the sun and planets gravitate towards one another, without dense matter between them?" (*Optics* III, Query 28 = *Opera* IV, 237), Clarke omits the words "almost" and "dense."
902 Bentley insists on the assumption of complete vacuum in his *Confutation of Atheism*, in: *Newton's Papers and Letters*, 325.
903 I, 32 f.
904 Cf. Snow, *Matter and Gravity*, 137 ff.

question of gravity's inherence in matter. Here too, Newton's strongest statement appears in his correspondence with Bentley; he assures his correspondent that he had always kept faith-promoting principles in mind when writing his work[905] and flatly labels the thesis of inherence an "absurdity.[906]" In fact, the *Principia* state that the concept of force is "mathematicus": "virium causas et sedes physicas non expendo.[907]"

If this assertion was usually not taken at face value during the 18th century, the blame also lay with Newton's own inability to clearly distinguish between the mathematical and the physical understanding of force.[908] Anticipating somewhat the discussion of the next section, we must nonetheless note that the main reason for this reception lay in the widespread willingness to strike at Cartesianism at its core—on both epistemological and ontological levels. The elevation of matter, which seemed to follow almost automatically from the questioning of Cartesian dualism, was eagerly linked with the downgrading of Cartesian mathematism, and both motives merged again in the open rejection or practical circumvention of the thesis that gravity should be understood solely in mathematical terms. Thus, in general, the spread of the thesis of inherence went hand-in-hand with the gradual triumph of the physical-experimental perspective over what was perceived as Descartes' abstract mathematical deductionism. Newton contributed to the former at least indirectly, inasmuch as he was made into a symbol of the latter. In other words: because identity of matter and extension, aimed at the geometrization of matter, and the primacy of the "noble" mathematical conception were considered linked in the eyes of most Enlightenment-era Newtonians, a purely mathematical treatment of force—without tangible physical implications—seemed to them (whether rightly or not) not merely unintelligible, but a direct violation of the newly achieved separation of matter and extension, which was supposed to mean that matter was something more than extension and thus could no longer be analyzed merely by "bare" mathematics. Nevertheless, the notion of gravity as a physical reality—rather than a mathematical fiction—gained traction particularly through the application of Newtonian principles from (mathematical) astronomy to

905 1st letter (= *Opera* IV, 429).
906 3rd letter from 25 February 1692 (= *Opera* IV, 438).
907 Definition VIII (= I, 45).
908 Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, 153.

physics.[909] Newton himself provided an opening for this widespread spontaneous connection between experimental physics and the enrichment of matter through inherent properties by formulating the rule that those properties should be considered general properties of bodies which are found in all bodies that can be tested by experiment. (This methodological precept he significantly reinforced with the ontological axiom of the internal logic or uniformity of nature's behavior.) However, Newton excluded from this class of properties those which could be increased or diminished—and thus also gravity; only *vis inertiae* was *insita.*[910] But the first step toward the inherence thesis was thus already taken—at least from the perspective of those who were eager to take the second—especially since, as we saw, materialist thinkers interpreted the resistance of matter itself as a sign of its permanent plenitude of force. Even a direct student of Newton like Pemberton speaks of "laws of motion" in the sense of "universal affections and properties of matter drawn from experience.[911]" Pemberton refrains from treating everything that pertains to matter in general as a true property of it and aligns himself with Newton's position on the matter—yet (and this is telling of the trend of the time) his suggestion that future empirical research might uncover new properties of matter could be interpreted to mean that it was only the current lack of experimental data that forced Newton to hold back. Ultimately, everything hinged on one's worldview: whether the available experimental evidence sufficed to posit an innate force of attraction, especially since no one wanted to claim that empirical findings outright excluded it.

The fact is that even Newton's immediate disciples—with the exception of Colin Maclaurin—considered gravity to be a real physical property of matter.[912] The same view took hold among Dutch physicists, who in turn significantly influenced the early reinterpretation and dissemination of Newtonianism on the continent.[913] The possibility of such future-oriented reinterpretations

909 This fact is noted by Rosenberger, *Newton*, 259 f.

910 *Principia*, Book III, Rule III (= II, 552, 554 f.).

911 *A View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, London 1728, Introduction and Chapter I; quoted in Strong, *Newtonian Explications...*, 65 f., 67.

912 Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, 16.

913 Brunet, *Les physiciens hollandais...*, throughout.

of Newton can be well illustrated through the work of a Newtonian who, though of considerable importance, remained fairly orthodox and conservative (at least regarding the issue at hand): Maupertuis. Maupertuis, of course, knows of Newton's refusal to regard gravity as a *loi primitive* or to name its cause, and he fully agrees with him.[914] Yet due to his empiricist-experimental orientation, he can at the same time claim that it is legitimate to assume gravity not as a *qualitas occulta* but as a real property of matter—provided that it does not contradict the other properties and that its effects can be observed. Even then, however, its essence would remain unknown—which, he notes, also holds true, for example, of Cartesian impulse and more generally of the way "*les propriétés résident dans un sujet.*[915]" Given this, we ought to prefer gravity—if it proves better suited to explain the phenomena.[916] Maupertuis, of course, is convinced that it does.[917] Here, phenomenalism plays a double role: it warns against hypostatizing gravity, yet also disqualifies its competitors even more radically—on the grounds that, as hypotheses, they are even less useful. This grants gravity such a thorough victory that nothing stands in the way of its eventual hypostatization, though initially rejected. Such was the course of development in the 18th century. Maupertuis is still at its beginnings. He relativizes his supposition—that gravity could in fact be a *propriété générale* of bodies—not only through his phenomenalism but even more drastically through the thesis that motion is not an *essential property* of matter, since it could just as well be at rest.[918] Thus, if gravity were indeed a general property of bodies, it would be only partially so—i.e., only in the relative state of motion.[919] Despite this reservation, the new tendency is clearly perceptible in Maupertuis; for in his case too it is rooted in the conviction that Cartesianism is scientifically unusable. With matter and motion alone, not everything can be explained; only through gravity had we freed ourselves from the "*insuffisance de cette simplicité,*[920]" which enabled the explanation of

914 *Essai de cosmologie*, Part II (= *Oeuvres* I, 48 f.).
915 *Discours sur la figure des astres*, § II (= *Oeuvres* I, 94 ff.).
916 Loc. cit., 103.
917 *Lettres*, XII: on Attraction (= *Oeuvres* II, 286).
918 *Essai de cosmologie*, Part II (= *Oeuvres* I, 32).
919 *Discours sur la figure...*, § II (= *Oeuvres* I, 96).
920 *Système de la Nature* I (= *Oeuvres* II, 139 f.).

a wide range of phenomena. The decisive turn is expressed in the phrase: "*Plus on a eu de phénomènes à expliquer, plus il a fallu charger la matière de propriétés.*[921]" In these words, Maupertuis summarizes the essence of a development whose radicality he either cannot or will not fully grasp. The ontological elevation of matter—that is, its gradual enrichment through properties and thus its acquisition of an autonomous life of its own—proceeds in parallel with the process of universalizing the anti-theological worldview: if all phenomena can be explained without any recourse to the concept of spirit, then only matter remains, and it alone—as the sole substance—becomes the full repository of all possible properties or modes. As Maupertuis rightly observes, gravity led both to an enrichment of matter and to an expansion of its interpretative jurisdiction.

Maupertuis boasted—not unjustly—that he was the first who "dared" to speak of gravity in France.[922] With this he clearly wanted to claim at least part of the credit usually attributed to Voltaire. Nevertheless, Voltaire's writings had a significantly greater impact on the educated public's opinion. It is thus all the more important for us that, in his widely read *Lettres philosophiques*, Voltaire considers gravity to be "more real" and a "qualité inhérente dans la matière.[923]" Tellingly, he concludes its reality precisely from its mathematical formulation—that is, he does not distinguish between mathematical and physical findings in order to relativize the latter by the former, but on the contrary, thinks the two together so as to affirm the latter through the former.[924] Moreover, he separates the question of the knowability of the cause of gravity from the question of its inherence in matter: the latter, he holds, is settled independently of any prior identification of the former.[925] A few years later, Voltaire again

921 *Système de la Nature* XXV (= *Oeuvres* II, 154).

922 *Lettres*, XII (= *Oeuvres* II, 284 f.). He refers to the first edition of his *Discours sur la figure des astres* from the year 1732.

923 *Lettre* XV (= *OC* XXII, 140, 139).

924 The formulation reads: "L'attraction ... est une chose réelle, puisqu'on en démontre les effets, et qu'on en calcule les proportions" (*OC* XXI, 140).

925 The formulation reads: attraction is "effet certain et indisputable d'un principe inconnu, qualité inhérente dans la matière, dont de plus habiles que moi [allegedly Newton speaks] trouveront, s'ils peuvent, la cause" (*OC* XXII, 139). As already with Pemberton, the cause of attraction appears here as still unknown but in principle knowable.

emphasizes the uniform presence of gravity in all particles of matter—as the condition for the functioning of natural laws—[926]but this time he is more reserved regarding its inherence and cites Newton directly in support.[927] The reason for this shift in emphasis is revealed by Voltaire's correspondence during the intervening period. In his private exchange with the Jesuit Father Tournemine, Voltaire places particular emphasis on the purely mathematical character of gravity[928] and even concedes—somewhat unclearly distinguishing—that gravity's inherence would not *ipso facto* imply that it is an essential property of matter.[929] He expresses the same caution again three years later in a letter to Abbé Prévost.[930] In the much later article *Matière* in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, however, he defines matter without further qualification as "*étendue, solide*" and beyond that as "*résistante, gravitante, mobile.*[931]" In this general formulation, however, lies something more than Newton would have readily admitted. The intellectual-historical significance of Voltaire's influence lies precisely in the fact that he was understood by the educated lay public he wrote for—and by whom he was cited as a source—in this general sense.[932]

Newton's distinction between the mathematical and physical understanding of attraction also fell victim to the increasing generalization of this concept. Tellingly, once again it was Newton himself who gave a hint in this direction—explicitly in connection with reflections on the nature of Nature itself. Attraction might not exist only as gravitation, magnetism, and electricity, he says in the *Opticks*: "there may be more Attractive powers than these. For Nature is very consonant and conformable to herself.[933]" This allowed the new chemistry to directly draw on Newton in its generalization of the principle of attraction. Newton's definition of mass, taking density into account, implied the assumption of a vacuum even within bodies,

926 *Éléments de la Philosophie de Newton*, Part III, Chapter VII (= *OC* XXII, 535 f.).
927 *Éléments...*, Part III, Chapter XIV (= *OC* XXII, 581 f.).
928 *OC* XXXIII, 518 (the letter was written in 1735
929 *OC* XXXIII, 522 (also from the year 1735).
930 Letter from July 1738 = *OC* XXXIV, 525 f.
931 *OC* XX, 50.
932 See, e.g., Argens, *Philosophie du bon sens*, Reflection III, § XXII (= II, 68).
933 *Optics* III, Query 31 (= *Opera* IV, 242).

since the difference in weight at equal volume was explained by the existence of empty spaces between the corpuscles.[934] Attraction was thus to perform the role of binding and cohesion both in the astronomical macrocosm and in the chemical microcosm.[935] What matters for us is that the chemical theory inspired by Newton was from the outset perceived as a counterposition to mechanism. While many chemists spoke of its compatibility with mechanism—generally trying to avoid theoretical conflicts—none (Lesage excepted) managed to actually prove such compatibility. Typically, the view prevailed that besides the mechanistically explainable causes of phenomena, there existed inexplicable, God-given properties of matter, such as attraction.[936] We will return to the function of this "God-given" later.[937] What is practically decisive is that the much-discussed inexplicability of attraction in no way prevented its elevation to a *passe-partout* of scientific interpretation: on the contrary, it was with its help that one hoped to escape the ever-growing complexity of mechanistic explanations. Already the shortcomings of the theory of attraction, which Maupertuis had noted—[938]its inability to clearly explain the diversity of concrete phenomena or to name the reason why one substance attracts another and not a third—seemed to cause little disturbance.[939] With the same epistemological and methodological carelessness, the effects of attraction were transferred to the neighboring domain of biology. For Buffon, attraction offered the key not only to understanding physical but also (in conjunction with heat) biological phenomena.[940] So we should not be surprised if, for example, Hartley tries to explain phenomena connected with "nerve substance" using the idea of attraction, directly citing Newton's *Optics*.[941] The widespread misuse of this freely applied analogical method in this field even provoked a reaction from a Newtonian like Voltaire. Some, he said, "ont pousse l'abus de la decouverte de Newton

934 Loc. cit. (= *Opera* IV, 252).
935 Loc. cit., 243; cf. the short treatise *De Natura Acidorum* (= *Opera* IV, 397 ff.).
936 Metzger, *Newton–Stahl–Boerhaave*, 38 f.
937 See below, Chapter VI, Section 2.
938 *Système de la Nature* III (= *Oeuvres* II, 141).
939 Metzger, *Newton–Stahl–Boerhaave*, 40, 46, 48 f., 65.
940 *La Nature*, Second View (= *Oeuvres Philosophiques* 41 A).
941 *Observations on Man...*, 20; cf. 27, 364.

sur l'attraction jusqu'a dire que les enfants se forment par l'attraction dans le ventre de leurs mères."[942] Equally typical of how Newton's principle was extended to the psychic realm is Hume's remark on the association of ideas: "Here is a kind of attraction, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural.[943]" Even a jurist and sociologist like Beccaria speaks of the "infinite ed oppostissime attrazioni del piacere e del dolore," assigning to them no less a function than that of "motori degli esseri sensibili.[944]" This brief overview of typical examples confirms Maupertuis' statement that "Le mot d'attraction a effaroud!.e les esprits.[945]" In the end, it became a "monstre métaphysique" that some loved and others hated.[946] The inspirational power of this concept, as someone aptly remarked,[947] was as great as its capacity for vulgarization. Popularity and popularization are clear signs that the magic of attraction satisfied deeper worldview needs. Even if we assume Newton was led to the theorem of attraction by compelling scientific reasons, no such reasons existed for the subsequent large-scale transfer of this concept to biological, psychic, and social phenomena. What mattered instead was the fight against Cartesian dualism and the drive to unify the worldview on a new basis: the fusion of mind and sensibility. It is to this new idea of the Whole—of which attraction was supposed to become a structural pillar—that we will return in the next subsection (3a).

b) The Meaning of the Fight Against Hypotheses

The dissociation of space and matter had an important methodological consequence, which—just like the rapprochement of mind and matter—ultimately benefited the radical rehabilitation of sensibility. In Descartes, the identification of space with matter was tied to the geometrization of physics: if matter is primarily space, then it must be treated by the science of space. The anti-Cartesian position

942 *Précis du siècle de Louis XV*, Chap. XLIII (= *OC* XV, 433).
943 *Treatise* I, i, iv (= p. 12 f.).
944 *Dei delitti e delle pene*, §§ 41 and 23 (= p. 91, 61).
945 *Discours sur la figure des astres*, § II (= *Oeuvres* I, 91).
946 *Essai de cosmologie*, Part II (= *Oeuvres* I, 46).
947 Metzger, *Newton's Mechanical Principles*, 66.

therefore had to articulate itself in the form of an elevation or emancipation of physics from mathematics. Physics—or matter—is liberated from the compulsion of geometrization at any cost. And since, within the Cartesian conception of the mathematical procedure, deduction prevailed, induction and empiricism now gain considerable ground. This development, while it begins with Newton (if one considers the Enlightenment period in isolation) and largely proceeds under reference to him, can hardly be identified with him. For the title of his major work already makes it clear that Newton did not become a mere empiricist out of fear of Cartesian mathematism. On the contrary, one may see his achievement in the harmonization of the mathematical and the empiricist currents of 17th-century natural science within his large-scale synthesis.[948] From the perspective of a more specific issue: Newton made the first attempt to treat contemporary theories of corpuscular motion mathematically—these had been developed by non-mathematicians like Gassendi and Boyle within an empiricist corpuscular physics directed against Cartesian mathematism and had, despite Galileo's earlier mathematization of motion, not yet been formulated mathematically.[949] One can thus, simplifying the historical progression somewhat, say that Newton methodologically led natural science back to the path laid down by Galileo after the Cartesian parenthesis—[950]or that his method was, essentially, only a development of Galileo's on a broader basis.[951] If a renunciation of the mathematical heritage is out of the question for this reason alone, then on the other hand, Newton's conscious turning away from what he considered abstract Cartesian deductionism must be precisely noted. A programmatic formulation of this already appears in the letters to Oldenburg from the year 1672, where the term "hypothesis" also emerges as a counter-concept to the experimental method, that is, as speculative reasoning not grounded in experiment.[952] Nevertheless,

948 Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, 12; Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, 158.

949 Boas-Hall, *Newton's Mechanical Principles*, 167 f.

950 Crombie, *Augustine to Galileo*, II, 325. Brunschvicg summed it up tersely: "Newton proceeds, one might say, entirely from Galileo" (*L'expérience humaine et la causalité physique*, 220).

951 Rosenberger, *Newton*, 392.

952 *Opera* IV, 320, 321, 335.

even in this context, it is emphasized that sciences like optics rest equally on physics and mathematical demonstrations.[953] In the *Principia*, this principle is resumed in the form that the results of mathematical analysis, which emerge through the work of reason from certain assumptions, should be compared with natural phenomena themselves.[954] Newton evidently does not believe in the possibility of designing a world-system mathematically a priori. He insists on the unity of mathematical and experimental procedure and seems, as a true son of the 17th century, to wish for a final epistemological securing of physics through its gradual translation into the language of mathematics.[955]

The general elevation of the empiricist standpoint is symbolically reflected in the use of the term *hypothesis*, which appears in the second edition of the *Principia* in a rather pejorative sense, and where it had previously served to designate a legitimate scientific procedure, it is replaced by the expression *Regulae Philosophandi* or Phaenomena.[956] This did not entail a practical change in Newton's scientific methodology, who never renounced the use of hypotheses as instruments of research, nor could he.[957] However, Newton employed, alongside scientifically legitimate hypotheses—i.e., those testable by experiment, whose necessity was emphasized even by strict empiricists such as Condillac—[958]others that could be proven neither mathematically nor from the phenomena.[959] These speculative hypotheses were evidently absolute space, absolute time, and absolute motion, which, as we know, proved indispensable for maintaining or further developing the mathematical approach in natural science, despite the recourse to the hermetic tradition. It is certainly no coincidence that Newton, precisely in the context of his foundational explanation of these concepts, writes the statement—hardly justifiable from strictly empiricist premises—that in natural philosophy one must

953 Loc. cit., 342.
954 *Principia*, Book I, Sect. XI, Prop. LXIX Scholium (= I, 298).
955 Boas-Hall, *Newton's Mechanical Principles*, 178.
956 *Principia*, Book III, beginning (= II, 550 ff.).
957 The different types of hypotheses Newton used for scientific purposes are summarized by Hanson, *Hypotheses fingo*, 30 f.
958 *Traité des systèmes*, Chap. XII (= *Œuvres* I, 196 a).
959 Cohen, *Franklin and Newton*, 128 ff.

abstract from the senses.[960] For the general character of Newton's reception in the Enlightenment, it is telling that such statements were seldom and only superficially acknowledged—let alone methodologically pursued. Instead, the experimental physicist Newton is generally distinguished—at least implicitly—from the mathematician Newton, the latter being silently disregarded. The development generally proceeded such that two different scientific currents stemmed from the *Principia* on one hand and the *Optics* on the other. This had a real basis in the fact that the *Principia* offered a mathematical physics of pure masses abstracted from real bodies, while the *Optics* dealt with the real modifications of masses in real bodies; Newton himself indirectly acknowledged this difference by particularly emphasizing the use of analytical methods in his *Optics.*[961] In Newton's time, most natural philosophers aligned more closely with the *Optics* than with the *Principia.*[962] Some of them, like J. Priestley and Colin Maclaurin, were quite aware of the twofold nature of Newton's work,[963] and this same perspective is indirectly reflected in Diderot's openly stated discomfort with the *Principia's* abstract and obscure character.[964] In general, however, there was a reluctance to split Newton, so as not to compromise the symbolic value of a figure who could serve as a powerful ally. Added to this was the rediscovery of Bacon on the Continent and the largely spontaneous fusion of Baconianism and Newtonianism in the formation and triumph of the empiricist standpoint. Here too, a real basis for this development existed, as Bacon's legacy was not without echoes in Newton's work, notably through the influence of Boyle, who considered Bacon "one of the first and greatest experimental philosophers of our age",[965] and indirectly through the general orientation of the Royal Society, which from the start was strongly shaped by Baconianism.[966] However, this

960 *Principia*, Definition VIII Scholium (= I, 49).
961 *Optics* III, Query 31 (= *Opera* IV, 263 f
962 Cohen, *Franklin and Newton*, 118, 120 ff., 143, 179.
963 Ibid., 189 ff.
964 *De l'interprétation de la nature*, XL (= *OC* II, 38 f.).
965 *The Christian Virtuoso*, First Part, I (= *Works* V, 514).
966 Purver, *The Royal Society*, esp. 63 ff. On Newton's ambivalent relationship to Bacon (tempering empiricism with strong mathematical orientation), see Blake, *Newton's Theory of Scientific Method*, 481 ff.

indirect and not exactly programmatic relationship of Newton to Bacon does not suffice to explain the fact that warm praise for Bacon's intellectual achievement became commonplace precisely in the *Age of Newton*.[967] The French Newtonians also saw in Newton not least the continuer and fulfiller of the scientific approach initiated by Bacon. Voltaire calls Bacon "le père de la philosophie expérimentale",[968] while d'Alembert is carried away in describing him as "le plus grand, le plus universel, et le plus éloquent des philosophes".[969] Even the earlier epistemological views of Diderot were by some contemporaries attributed to Bacon's influence.[970] What is interesting with regard to developments we will describe next is that, despite his general methodological agreement with Bacon, Diderot differs from him in that he wishes to link the elevation of empiricism or sense perception as a cognitive organ with a radical ontological elevation of sensuality or matter itself.[971]

In light of these observations on the general trajectory of the 18th century, we can now explain why Newton did not suffer a guilty conscience when he occasionally ventured into metaphysical speculation, even while publicly opposing unverifiable hypotheses—and why his Newtonian followers were likewise unbothered by this and, as we will later examine in more detail,[972] made constitutive use of hypotheses that could not be empirically verified. The apparent paradox dissolves once we grasp the polemical meaning behind the campaign against hypotheses. For Newton, and especially for his empiricist successors, the mistreatment of phenomena is largely identical with adherence to very specific doctrinal positions. The manner in which Newton, in a famous passage, lists methodological and substantive issues in the same breath is highly telling: "*Quidquid enim ex phaenomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est; et hypotheses seu metaphysicae, seu physicae, seu qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicae in Philosophia experimentali locum non habent*".[973] Here, it is quite clear

967 Mornet, *Les sciences de la nature*, 86.
968 *Lettres philosophiques* XII (= *OC* XXII, 118.
969 *Discours préliminaire*, *Œuvres* I, 264.
970 Venturi, *La jeunesse de Diderot*, 313 ff.
971 Cf. Diederichmann, *The Influence of Francis Bacon…*, in: *Studien*, 56 f.
972 See below, Chapter V, Sections 1 and 2.
973 *Principia*, Book III, General Scholium (= II, 764).

that he is targeting those who, in his view, abuse phenomena through hypotheses: namely, the mechanists and the occultists, the Cartesians and the Scholastics. Newton had a specific polemical target in mind when he wrote these lines,[974] and this same target made the anti-hypothesis rhetoric so appealing to Enlightenment thinkers. Since Cartesian and Scholastic thought was said to rely on speculative hypotheses—and even to hold a not particularly enviable monopoly on their use—the opposing camp, at least in the eyes of its proponents, could almost automatically claim to be defending empiricism.[975] In any case, among the first generation of Newtonians, the aversion to *(bad)* hypotheses developed out of opposition to Cartesianism—a development that is better explained psychologically than logically, especially when we consider that they added nothing fundamentally new to the insights of the founders of modern science regarding the use of scientifically legitimate hypotheses or the rejection of those unable to save the phenomena.[976] Even the early Dutch Newtonians understood Newton's *"Hypotheses non fingo"* as an expression of a primarily anti-Cartesian empiricism.[977]

The link between the struggle against hypotheses and the rejection of Cartesianism's substantive positions becomes increasingly clear throughout the Enlightenment and the ontological elevation of matter. Fighting against hypotheses now means not merely taking sides in favor of the empirical-inductive method in natural science, but rather a fundamental renunciation of Cartesian metaphysical dualism and intellectualism—whereby Newton, indirectly, becomes a forerunner or ally of materialistically inclined positions. Seen from this perspective, the comparison between Descartes and Newton—by the 18th century a cliché—takes on the quality of a symbolic ritual: the rejection of hypotheses becomes the antechamber of the radical rehabilitation of sensuality, regardless of the fact that few dared to step beyond that threshold. A Neo-Cartesian like Fontenelle could still, in the obligatory comparison between Newton and Descartes, reduce

974 On the polemical component in Newton's rejection of hypotheses, cf. Bloch, *La Philosophie de Newton*, 469, 476.

975 We already noted the effect of this same mental automatism in Galileo; see above, Chapter II, Section 2b.

976 Rosenberger, Newton, 395 f., 406.

977 Ruestow, Physics at 17th and 18th Century Leiden, 121 ff.

their difference to Newton's preference for induction and Descartes' for deduction, while also emphasizing what they shared in common: "*tous deux ont fondé leur physique sur une géométrie*".[978] For Voltaire, however, it is already the case that depending on whether one sides with Descartes or Newton, "*l'essence même des choses a totalement changé*".[979] From his belief that Descartes devised a false physics because he succumbed to the "*esprit de système*",[980] it follows that correctness of content and empiricism must go hand in hand. Now Voltaire counts among the errors caused by Cartesian deductivism even those theses that cannot be empirically tested and which are directly tied to metaphysical dualism (such as the nature of the soul and innate ideas).[981] If, however, the choice of the empiricist method necessarily entails the rejection of theses that cannot be empirically confirmed or refuted, then it must—consciously or unconsciously—go hand in hand with specific substantive precommitments. We should therefore not be surprised that the strongest objections to Cartesian "hypotheses" and the deductive method—always accompanied by praise for Newton—come precisely from those who reject Descartes for general worldview reasons. The fact that not only Condillac[982] but also Diderot[983] drew on the stereotypical contrast between Newton and Descartes is likely symptomatic.

This constellation of motives and ideas becomes more comprehensible if we momentarily set aside the self-understanding of the parties involved and the nominal value of their declarations, in order to discern the polemical—that is, non-empiricist—character of the appeal to empiricism. Regardless of whether empiricism (whatever that may mean) is indeed the origin and source of all knowledge, empiricism does not constitute the "natural" epistemological stance, but rather a particular worldview position that, under certain conditions, opposes a particular metaphysics—often presented as a struggle against *all* metaphysics. Epistemological and methodological positions already presuppose worldview commitments, so the

978 Éloge de Newton, in Krauss' Textauswahl, 244.
979 Lettres philosophiques XIV (= OC XXII, 128).
980 loc. cit., S. 131.
981 Ibid.
982 Traité des Systèmes, XII (= Oeuvres I, 198a, 199b, 200).
983 Bijoux Indiscrets IX (= OC, IV, 162 f.).

elimination of "hypotheses" on the epistemological level had to go hand in hand—logically and structurally—with the attack on "bad" metaphysics. Descartes, in his role as the polemical target, significantly facilitated the work of the new anti-metaphysicians by insisting—during his attempt to construct a viable alternative to scholasticism—on the unity of physics and metaphysics. In the polemic against Descartes, it thus seemed only consistent and logical to turn the fight against hypotheses into a fight against speculative-hypothetical metaphysics. Condillac's *Traité des systèmes*, in which almost all key arguments of modern "positivists" against metaphysics are prefigured, shows how thoroughly this work was undertaken. Now that Newton had become a symbolic figure in the struggle against "hypotheses," he also had to become the prophet of the rejection of "metaphysics." From the perspective of Enlightenment thinkers, the empiricist Newton appears simultaneously as an anti-metaphysician—that is, an opponent of abstract hair-splitting and an advocate of the living, according to the new scale of values. The agnostic Newton is likewise seen in a positive light, one who limits himself to the description of phenomena and refrains from metaphysical explanations of their essence. Newton's explicit rejection of explanatory hypotheses—those that seek to answer the question of the essence of things—in favor of the operational use of hypotheses[984] is often reinterpreted as a repudiation of traditional metaphysics altogether. Newton's agnosticism is supposed to deliver the final blow to Cartesianism, insofar as the latter had aimed to answer ultimate questions about the nature of things. While Cartesian ambition is deemed hubristic, this farewell to total knowledge does not lead to incurable epistemological pessimism—especially since, on the other hand, belief in the continual progress of the sciences was taking hold in ever broader circles.[985]

Because the agnosticism is polemical in intent, it does not develop into a comprehensive skepticism or nihilism: the skepticism is directed only at the opponent's worldview assumptions—not one's own—and is meant to prepare the ground for the construction of a

984 This distinction between the two types of hypotheses is found in Pala, *La controversia Newton sulle ipotesi*, pp. 40 f.

985 The mixture of agnosticism and belief in scientific progress is also encountered among educated laypeople or Newtonians like Bolingbroke; see Fletcher, *Bolingbroke...*, pp. 44 f.

new worldview. It has been aptly observed of Maupertuis[986] that his refusal to name first causes in the metaphysical sense[987] in no way meant a rejection of the strict idea of causality.[988] One avoids the opponent's terrain because one does not know it, and the certainties (such as causality) needed for one's own approach are assumed *a limine*. The prevailing conviction remains that one can only remain faithful to the phenomena by interpreting them from the standpoint of one's own foundational orientation. Even ideas that are valid in themselves lose their meaning if not used within the "correct" worldview framework. Take causality again: d'Alembert writes about Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason that while it is *"très vrai en lui-même"*, it can hardly be useful for beings to whom the first causes of things are inaccessible.[989] Its use in *metaphysicis* is therefore pointless; one should concentrate on the nature of phenomena and avoid speculation about natures that lie beyond them. Thus, the Enlightenment thinkers who based themselves on Newton's methodological ideal did not regard their renunciation of knowledge of first causes as a defeat of reason—but simply as a triumph of empiricism. Their own reason could not be defeated in its polemical perspective, since it was inextricably bound to the irrefutable testimony of experience, indeed to the empirical world itself; the real loser, then, was only theological speculation. The polemical meaning of this agnosticism is clear: it aims to shut down the entire problem space of the opposing metaphysics and thereby establish the new worldview assumptions as the exclusive framework for all serious thought. The old but still competitive questions are not called false—thus avoiding accusations of atheism, etc.—but simply dismissed as meaningless or hopeless, which amounts to an even more effective neutralization. Typical again is a statement by d'Alembert. Philosophy (we shall soon return to the meaning of this word), he writes, "*s'abstient même de traiter des questions dont l'objet peut être plus réel, mais dont la solution n'est pas plus utile au progrès de nos connaissances*".[990] He also states explicitly which "objects" are meant here: all those that once

986 Brunet, *Maupertuis*, II, pp. 346 f.
987 *Discours sur la figure des astres* § II = *Œuvres* I, p. 93.
988 *Essai de cosmologie*, Avant-Propos = *Œuvres* I, p. xv.
989 *Discours préliminaire*, *Œuvres* I, p. 279.
990 *Éléments...* IV (= *Œuvres* II, p. 31).

provided the material for scholastic disputation. This tells us quite clearly that, although d'Alembert acknowledges the possible reality of such objects, he does not wish to derive any binding practical conclusions from them. Rather, this is a lip service—intended not just to avoid unnecessary trouble, but perhaps also to soothe his own conscience in a time when God is not yet (entirely) dead—neither in the heavens nor in men's souls.[991] By strictly distinguishing between truths of faith and truths of reason,[992] d'Alembert satisfies both a logical and a psychological need—though he devotes himself solely to the latter and wishes not to be disturbed by the former. Agnosticism and phenomenalism, also typically endorsed by Condillac,[993] address all these complicated tasks in one sweep and allow thought to proceed without further distraction. This structure of thought, constructed according to the aforementioned general principles and from the standpoint of this foundational orientation, is now called—just as d'Alembert has shown us—"philosophy" or *philosophie expérimentale* (as cited earlier from Voltaire in this section). The adoption of this terminology implies, and presupposes, the elimination of old metaphysics and the orientation of all serious thought toward the empirical world—in other words, the foundational assumption of modern rationalism. Because Newton, following the British *virtuosi* and Boyle,[994] used the term *philosophia*[995] or *philosophia naturalis* (already in the title of his major work) in the sense of "physics," and because he even preferred the term "experimental philosophy" in contexts where he opposed "hypotheses",[996] the Newtonians were happy to assume that Newton fully endorsed their worldview assumptions—those implicitly embedded in that specific semantic field of the term "philosophy." Since this semantic field was widespread in the 18th century, it became a convenient detour for the reinterpretation of Newton.

991 See below, Chapter VI, Section 2.
992 *Éléments...* III (= *Œuvres* II, p. 26).
993 *Art de penser*, Première Partie, Chapitre XI (= *Œuvres* I, pp. 750 f.).
994 For example, *The Christian Virtuoso* Part I (= *Works* V, pp. 513 f.).
995 For example, in the preface of the *Principia* and at the beginning of the third book (= I, p. 15; II, p. 549).
996 For example, *Optics* III, Query 31 (= *Works* IV, p. 263).

3. From the Nature-Machine to the Nature-Deity

The preceding account of Newton's long-term impact on intellectual history might give the impression that he became the idol of the era because his work—whether intentionally or not—initially fostered empiricist and agnostic, and ultimately anti-theological, tendencies. But in fact the opposite is true: later anti-theological movements invoked Newton, and even accepted some reinterpretation, precisely because he had already become a symbolic figure. It was now advisable for all parties to harness him for their own purposes. Even if the mere invocation of his name could not convince opponents, it at least served to make a position more socially acceptable, more immune to various polemics, and especially to the charge of atheism. The first apotheosis of Newton, which effectively made invoking him nearly obligatory, occurred within the ideological framework of an enlightened theology—or rather, an Enlightenment that sought to ground itself on a more flexible and modernized theology. This form of Enlightenment theology could flourish primarily in England after the "Glorious Revolution," but it quickly took on a broader European significance (precedents in the Netherlands and elsewhere laid the groundwork), since it seemed to offer a sought-after reconciliation between positions that had become embarrassing—at least for large parts of theologians distancing themselves from "obscurantism" and laypeople who abhorred atheism. The power of this psychological need for reconciliation stemmed from the extreme and barely bearable contrast between the clearly emerging worldview alternatives. Compromise, however, required concessions—and concessions that initially benefitted both sides could ultimately prove fatal for the side already disadvantaged by the current of the times. That this was the theological side became evident in the way its enlightened wing adopted the new secular language, attempting not merely to preserve what it saw as the "essential" in Christianity through reformulation, but to strengthen it propagandistically. In both intellectual and political disputes, it often

happens that one adopts the language of the opponent to preempt their arguments—without realizing how much the habits of thought tied to that linguistic form shift as a result, ultimately undermining the defense of the original content that was once clothed in that form. In such cases, the heterogony of ends reveals itself in all its mercilessness, especially as initial successes lull those who like to consider themselves "open" or "modern." Conversely, whoever succeeds in imposing their language is eo ipso also in the process of making their concepts at least the unavoidable point of reference for any socially effective thinking—thus dictating the terms of the conversation. In this section, we will briefly trace the development by which Enlightenment theology, in its struggle against Cartesian mechanism, brought forth patterns of thought that ultimately favored the ontological elevation of matter by way of the deification of nature. The processing or transformation of motives from Enlightenment theology represents only one aspect of the overall process—but it is the one that holds the key to explaining Newton's astonishing trajectory.

The intellectual crisis that had to be triggered by the collapse of the Aristotelian worldview also took on, in England, despite all its specific features, those typical forms under which we encounter it on the Continent. The logical structure of the problem was the same everywhere, the same traditional scale of values was everywhere endangered, and therefore a similarity in the reactions to the new situation was only natural. In comparison to the ontological solidity and reliability of God, rehabilitated nature appeared as the realm of incessant change and inexorable transience—a transience that, at least for the individual human being, is irrevocable without supernatural intervention, even if nature as a whole continues its course undisturbed despite the demise of individual (replaceable) components. The integration of man into this nature had to be experienced and lamented as a submission to the bitter law of transience, as Renaissance literature abundantly attests.[997] This feeling was all the more oppressive since movement or change and transience did not even stop at the gates of heaven. As we know,[998] the

997 Cameron Allen, *The degeneration of man …*, esp. 206 f., 215 ff. Allen mainly uses material from the English Renaissance, which, however, possesses the value of the typical.

998 See above, Chapter II, Section 2 b.

unification of the worldview through the new natural science consisted in eliminating the Aristotelian, cosmologically and metaphysically implication-rich separation of the heavenly region from the sublunar. That which had once stood above all change, thus above all finitude, now seemed to share the general fate, unsettling those who, already conscious of human weakness, had drawn comfort and hope (if not a justification for claims to power) from it. The motto that Spenser placed before his *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie* sums up the problem and the anxiety of an entire age: "*Proud Change (not pleas'd, in mortall things, I beneath the Moone, to raigne) / Pretends, as well of Gods, as Men, / to be the Souveraine.*[999]" In the 17th century, the controversy over the questions raised by the by-then developed mathematical natural science had to be expanded and deepened.[1000] Not only had motion seemingly swallowed the once immobile, but the closed cosmos had also been replaced by the infinite universe. While this infinity represented a challenge and awakened a Promethean sense of self and world for some, it inspired in many others that shudder before the unknown and meaningless so clearly articulated in Pascal's famous sentence about the overwhelming "*silence éternel de ces espaces infinis*.[1001]" The conservatives clearly understood that the infinity of the new universe entailed the dissolution of the hierarchies of the cosmos and thus the endangerment of the very idea of hierarchy—also in the social sense. Donne recognized and expressed the connection: "'*Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone; / All just supply, and all Relation: / Prince, Subject, Father, Son, are things forgot...*"[1002] The circle that symbolized the harmony of the cosmos was nonetheless definitively broken,[1003] and the search for alternatives began. Close at hand lay, of course, the ostentatious disdain for the new natural science or the juxtaposition of the unfriendliness of the vast universe with the shelter

999 *Poetical Works*, 394. On the motif of "Mutability" as "the seedbed of scepticism," especially in Spenser, see Wiley, *Creative Sceptics*, 21ff.

1000 Generally Harris, *All coherence gone*, passim; cf. also Bredvold, *The Intellectual Milieu of J. Dryden*, 47 ff.

1001 *Pensées* No. 206 (= OC XIII, 127).

1002 *The Anatomy of the World*, vv 212 ff., in: *The Poems*, 214.

1003 On the symbol of the circle and its fate, see Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle*, 47 ff.; on Donne, 87 ff.

and autonomy that only faith in God could provide.[1004] Some, in their perplexity, profess adherence to Tycho Brahe's cosmological compromise, while others admit to having renounced their conviction in the scientific correctness of the Copernican thesis, for instance, out of consideration for their faith; even among the Jesuits, uncertainty and unease occasionally become apparent.[1005] The new natural science had created facts in both scientific and social terms, and no one could simply ignore it—least of all those who, in trying to ignore it entirely, allowed their own position to be dictated negatively by it. Since this stance, given the established facts, was ideologically sterile, the thought arose to bring the worldview consequences of the new image of the world under control by incorporating it into a necessarily reformed religious concept.

That was the cosmological aspect of the same crisis whose anthropological aspect we have already described.[1006] The intensity and physiognomy of the crisis form precisely the background of Newton's apotheosis. The question, however, is not whether Newton resolved the crisis by logical means by "demonstrating" the compatibility (at least of one version) of theology with (at least one version) of natural science. The desire to resolve the crisis was so strong that many were ready to see anyone as a savior, provided they fulfilled certain conditions. Newton's personal piety and high scientific qualifications were excellent recommendations, but certain substantive aspects of his physics, which we will discuss shortly, also played a role. The poem that E. Halley placed at the beginning of the first edition of the *Principia* illustrates the full fervor of expectation for the conqueror of the crisis.[1007] However, Newton was not the first to aim for a reconciliation between the new natural science and (reformed) theology. Previous attempts had already crystallized into a stereotypical rhetoric that interested parties could take refuge in, and whose influence Newton himself could not escape.[1008] For the British *Virtuosi*, whose efforts in this direction Newton essentially continued

1004 Nicolson softens this stance using the example of the poet G. Herben (*The Breaking of the Circle*, 177 ff.).
1005 Busson, *Religion des classiques*, 104 ff.
1006 See above, Chapter II, Section 3.
1007 I, 12 ff., especially vv. 25 ff.
1008 Manuel, *The Religion of Newton*, 9.

and completed, the principle of agreement was self-evident.[1009] The *Virtuosi* had also realized that reconciliation between theology and natural science made a reform of the former unavoidable; they were not skeptics, but since they wanted to bring about reconciliation, they tended—under the impression of the religious wars—to this or that form of natural religion.[1010] The most important reason why the *Virtuosi* nevertheless failed to achieve the desired reconciliation or resolution of the crisis was probably their mechanism, in which they did not want to see a contradiction with providence, but which nonetheless caused them logical difficulties.[1011] Boyle, who attempted to demonstrate the effect of providence based on "Cartesian principles," silently avoided disturbing the autonomy of mechanism with any ad hoc interventions by God and concealed the actual problem behind the emphatic emphasis on Cartesian dualism: since matter was dead, it must receive motion from God, and since mind and body were radically distinct, God could concern himself exclusively and especially with the former.[1012] But regarding the functioning of the lifeless-mechanical itself, Boyle is taciturn; other statements from him at least allow the conclusion that he tended more toward the concept of general providence, according to which God, caring not for the good of individuals but of the whole, had established from the beginning general inviolable laws—[1013]a concept that was consistent with the nature of mechanism.

Now it was precisely this concept that made the Cambridge Platonists no less than the orthodox theologians suspicious of Descartes. Newton, by contrast, at least questioned the absolute validity of mechanism by postulating forces and, beyond that, asserting their non-mechanical or divine origin.[1014] The perforation of

1009 Westfall, *Science and Religion in 17th Century England*, 26 ff., 192 ff.; on the later role of representatives of the Boyleian tendency in spreading Newtonianism as a reconciliation ideology, see Metzger, *Attraction universelle et religion naturelle ...*, passim.

1010 Westfall, *Science and Religion ...*, 107.

1011 *op. cit.*, 77 ff.

1012 *The Christian Virtuoso*, First Part = *Works* V, 520 f.

1013 *A Free Inquiry into the Received Notion of Nature* = *Works* V, 199.

1014 See for example the first and fourth letters to Bentley (= *Opera* IV, 430, 441).

the mechanism by forces also permitted its perforation by the cause of these forces—by God. It is no coincidence that the earliest authors of the Newton legend deployed Newton's physics against both Cartesian and Hobbesian mechanism.[1015] But they also—from the very beginning, and more importantly—embedded Newton's natural philosophy into a comprehensive ideology, or interpreted the former according to the needs of the latter. By creating a broad Protestant consensus, the Latitudinarians sought to reaffirm, indirectly and discreetly, the spiritual leadership of the Church, which had been shaken by the *Glorious Revolution*, while simultaneously intensifying the fight against the increasingly bold *freethinkers* after 1690, in the spirit of precisely that leadership claim.[1016] The consensus obviously had to rest on the reconciliation of general physics with natural and revealed religion.[1017] Despite initial resistance from conservative theologians, the Latitudinarians—who also had personal ties to Newton—prevailed with their line. Their propagandistic strategy relied not only on the attempt to transform physics in its most general aspect into a pious study of the works of God, and thereby render it harmless, but also on a parallelism between nature and society, wherein the balance of the former was to serve as the model for the latter. Even chiliastic dreams of final harmony, though they soon faded, found a place within the Latitudinarian framework.[1018] It is also well known how a vulgarizer of Newton like Desaguliers made use of Newton's model of nature to glorify the English constitution.[1019]

Two aspects of this development must be emphasized here. First: the liberalization of theology, which was necessary for its rapprochement with natural science and thus to avoid the feared anti-theological consequences thereof, did in fact enable an overcoming of the crisis of the 17th century, initially within a distinctly religious context. Not least its protection by reformed theology, which helped to break both external and internal resistance from believers, secured for natural science such a status in the eyes of the public (initially useful to both sides) that it soon became independent of that protection—

1015 Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, 17, 19, 24 ff.
1016 *op. cit.*, 143 ff., 201 ff.
1017 Metzger, *Attraction universelle ...*, 7.
1018 Jacob, *The Newtonians ...*, 39 ff., 33 f., 37, 60, 129 ff.
1019 Details on this in Wagner, *Newton*, 22 ff.

although many of its representatives continued to make use of it as much as possible. And since reformed theology had not ended the crisis *against* but *together with* natural science, the earlier almost automatic association of the terms "crisis" and "natural science" lost its relevance—something which naturally could only benefit the latter and those aiming at its autonomization. In this way, the overcoming of the crisis by reformed theology paves the way for a non-theological overcoming of the same crisis, and thus also for the overcoming of reformed theology itself. Second: a multidimensional crisis could only be ideologically overcome through the deployment of a multidimensional synthesis. The prompt transfer—whether epistemologically legitimate or not—of the "Newtonian model" to social and religious questions was an expression of the polemical need for comprehensiveness. Even from the standpoint of reformed theology, a new idea of the whole was indispensable, one that had to encompass all levels of being, from cosmology to politics and religion. What is important here is that this unification of being had to be conceived not simply epistemologically, but downright ontologically. A certain monistic tendency was, incidentally, plausible for polemical reasons, since the main opponent was considered to be Cartesian mechanism or dualism; something similar had already occurred with the Cambridge Platonists. This tendency, however, could under no circumstances lead to a full-fledged monism. Nevertheless, the demand was raised for a harmonious coexistence of spirit and sensibility, or of God and world, or of reason and drive, etc.—understood as the substantive correlate of the attempted large-scale synthesis of (reformed) theology and (anti-mechanistic) natural science. It is obvious that this comprehensive idea of the whole—just like the new authority of natural science—could detach itself from its original connection with (or subordination to) the theology of the reformers, and even turn against it.

Not merely because Newtonianism contributed to overcoming the crisis in a general sense, but especially because its contribution lay in establishing a new idea of the whole within which there was also room for the rehabilitation of sensibility, it was perceived by broad circles as a "religion" (as Voltaire put it).[1020] The extent and forms that

1020 Letter to Maupertuis from 8.11.1732 (= OC, XXXIII, 302).

the apotheosis of Newton assumed are well known.[1021] Key figures in the dissemination of the Newtonian "religion" included men like Bolingbroke, who were laymen in natural science, adhered to reformed theology (even of a deist or natural religion kind), readily reduced Cartesianism to speculative hypotheses, and therefore leaned epistemologically toward Locke.[1022] The degree to which Newton was vulgarized is evident in works like Algarotti's.[1023] In this way, natural science was integrated into the broad educational interest of the time and aroused enthusiasm in all educated circles.[1024] But vulgarization and dissemination are indicators that the *fermentation vive* which, according to d'Alembert, natural science unleashed in people's minds,[1025] had not scientific but rather ideological causes. Most seductive in its tactical flexibility, of course, was the ideal of new harmony, as it was expressed in the new idea of the whole. Within this newly gained harmony, however, a development soon begins to emerge—due to the continuous elevation and autonomization of nature—that was bound to destabilize the initial concord between Newtonian natural science and reformed theology. One indication of this development is, for instance, that the new link between literature and natural science almost completely displaces the older, frequent literary treatment of theological themes.[1026] Many attempt what even Voltaire did not achieve, namely "*gliter à la fois la poésie et la physique*",[1027] and in doing so use motifs from Newton's *Optics* or

1021 See the useful summary by Wagner, *Newton* 106 ff., who also considers Newton's representation in the visual arts. For more specific detail see Vogt, *Boullée's Newton Monument*, passim.

1022 Fletcher, *Bolingbroke and the diffusion of Newtonianism ...*, 31 f., 42, 37

1023 *Il Newtonianismo per le Dame, ovvero Dialoghi sopra la luce e i colori*, Naples 1737. The book was even translated twice into English, despite there being no shortage of domestic popularizing literature.

1024 Richter, *Literatur und Naturwissenschaft*, 26 ff., 176 ff. On the translation of popular science works and the popularizing efforts of journals in Germany, see Schatzberg, *Scientific Themes in the Popular Literature ...*, 21 ff., 87 ff. On general interest in experimental physics and natural history in the 18th century, see the summary by Mornet, *Sciences de la vie*, 87 ff., 173 ff.; cf. Hofbauer, *Chemistry's Enlightened Audience*, esp. 1073, 1081, 1085 f.

1025 *Eléments ...*, I (= *Oeuvres* II, 10 f.).

1026 Richter, *Liter. u. Naturwiss.*, 47.

1027 *Épitre LIV, Au Prince Royal de Prusse* (1738), = *OC*, X, 307.

similar works.[1028] Significantly, it doesn't stop there: the use of individual motifs or the glorification of certain aspects of nature gradually intensifies into a hymn to nature as such, or as a personified being.[1029] Here, a process reaches its conclusion that in fact began at the end of the 17th century and had already merged with the early spread of Newtonian "religion." It is the emergence of the new feeling for nature. From the standpoint of the classical or geometrical ideal, which in the 17th century was often dominant, nature appeared sublime or elevated, but not beautiful. The identification of nature with all-encompassing harmony through the Newtonian model now endows it with beauty, so that eventually (in Shaftesbury and especially in Addison), even irregularity—what characterizes the forms of nature and made them unpleasant in the eyes of the classicists—is seen as beautiful in itself or even as the sole source of beauty.[1030] In addition, attributes that were originally assigned only to God but were transferred by More to cosmic space (e.g. infinity, i.e., greatness both in quantitative and qualitative terms), are now directly attributed to visible nature.[1031]

Physico-theology significantly facilitated—albeit unintentionally—the birth of the Nature-deity. It was already a rather old phenomenon in intellectual history, but its heyday fell, tellingly, together with the rise of modern natural science,[1032] specifically as part of the theological attempt to get that rise under control. It was largely pursued by moderate theologians who sought to modernize or adapt their discipline in thought and language and to make it viable for survival—by demonstrating that the concept of God thrives even, or especially, when nature is taken as the general frame of reference for thought. Works such as J. Ray's *Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1691) or W. Derham's *Physico-Theology or a Demonstration*

1028 Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse*, 20 ff., 55 ff.; Schatzberg, *Scientific Themes ...*, 311 f., 92 f., 188 f.; Omasreiter, *Naturwissenschaft und Literaturkritik*, 40 ff. Omasreiter also examines the adoption of terms, questions, and methodological insights from the natural sciences by literary criticism, 102 ff., 22 ff.

1029 Murdoch, *Newton and the French Muse*, 327 f.

1030 Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, 222, 224, 279 f., 317.

1031 *Op. cit.*, 293, 224.

1032 Philipp, *Physicotheology in the Age of Enlightenment*, 1249 ff., 1259.

of the Being and Attributes of God from his Works in Creation (1713) partly made physico-theology fashionable and sparked an almost unmanageable flood of physico-theological literature.[1033] It covered the whole spectrum: from physics manuals in which the observation of nature was meant to provide proofs of God, to edifying texts in which pious experience culminated in admiration of God's works in nature. Herder spoke in 1774 of the "half-hundred physico-theologies"—[1034] and he did not exaggerate. Two points are important for us. First: physico-theology is optimistic—that is, it consciously distances itself from the pessimism of the Baroque era—[1035]and thereby forms an essential part of the intellectual current that contributed to the initial overcoming of the 17th-century crisis through a reconciliation of theology and natural science. However, the rapid secularization of its motives[1036] shows that the initiators of this development were not able to determine its trajectory. This is also evident from the second point we wish to emphasize: the objectively anti-Cartesian or anti-dualist effect of physico-theology. The elimination of *causae finales* provoked a panic even among enlightened theological circles—just as it had with the Cambridge Platonists—because they were trained in scholastic concepts and saw the exclusion of teleology more or less as a death blow to God. They therefore set out to discover the finger of God in every corner of nature. Mechanicism was countered by seeking the divine in the visible and tangible. An organicism or biologism that also opposed the mathematical method clung to physico-theology, which thus—intentionally or not—made common cause with empiricism or sensualism in fighting intellectualism, until finally the animation of nature led to its autonomization: in other words, not everyone continued to see that the immanent teleology or soul of things was merely the breath of God. The divine origin of the force and motion immanent in matter was, in other words, no longer emphasized so strongly, as people had become accustomed to considering everything as living or purposeful anyway. In short, one could say that physico-theology played the role of the useful idiot for materialism. (However,

1033 Philipp, *Das Werden der Aufklärung ...*, 21 ff.; Schatzberg, *Scientific Themes ...*, 64 ff., 26 ff.
1034 *Älteste Urkunde ...*, Part 1, I = *SW* VI, 202 n. a
1035 Philipp, *Das Werden der Aufklärung ...*, 74 ff., 95 ff., 100.
1036 *Op. cit.*, 142.

as we will see, it could not have played this role if the latter had been a mere continuation of the older mechanism that physico-theology opposed.) Kant therefore rightly pointed out how close some had come to Spinozism or pantheism—those who "as physicists also wanted to be theologians".[1037]

Newton's personal influence on the spread of physico-theology and, above all, on the emergence of the new idea of the Whole is no more to be understood as straightforward than his role in promoting the empiricist–anti-metaphysical attitude. Once again, he gave hints without himself anticipating or authoritatively determining their intellectual trajectory. The conception of natural science as the study of the works of God had already become the established ideological form under which natural science gained a foothold in social circles unwilling under any circumstances to renounce their Christian faith.[1038] Boyle's statements as well[1039] confirm the Virtuosi's inclination toward physico-theology—[1040]not to mention the Cambridge Platonists.[1041] Having grown up in this tradition, Newton—who was, incidentally, friends with Derham—may have disapproved of some excesses of physico-theology; nevertheless, he overall encouraged it.[1042] Not only in the structure of the solar system, but also in the constitution of living beings, he wanted—against mechanistic conceptions of nature and in agreement with the physico-theologians—to identify the direct teleological action of God.[1043] This, however, was for him a necessary consequence of God's sovereignty, which in turn was tied to His omnipresence; it was thus purchased at the price of a further approximation between God and world. For the seemingly paradoxical structural link between the fight against hypotheses (i.e., the elevation of the empiricist standpoint) and this deepening of divine presence in the world, one of Newton's arguments against mechanism, placed just before a strongly physico-theological

1037 *Kritik der Urteilskraft* § 85 (= *AA*, V 439 f.).
1038 Manuel, *Newton's Religion*, 33 ff.
1039 *The Christian Virtuoso*, First Part (= *Works* V, 518 f.).
1040 Westfall, *Science and Religion ...*, 49 ff.
1041 On More's physicotheology, see above, Chapter III, Section 3 (note 195).
1042 Manuel, *Newton's Religion*, 39 ff.
1043 First letter to Bentley (= *Opera* IV, 430 ff.); *Optics* III, Qu. 28 and 31 (= *Opera* IV, 237 f., 261 f.).

passage, is revealing: mechanists, he says, are compelled to stick to their mechanistic fictions precisely because they exclude metaphysical causes; but if one abandons such fictions and proceeds empirically and inductively, then one must arrive at a first cause that is not mechanical.[1044] Rejection of hypotheses thus also means rejection of the sharp separation between the mechanical and the metaphysical, a unification of the world by including God (or His effects) in it. Here, the new idea of the Whole becomes visible in Newton. It is further supported by statements in which Newton expresses his interest in a total view of nature. This refers not only to his oft-repeated and much-cited thesis that nature is simple and conforms to itself,[1045] but also to his explicit ambition to demonstrate the value of his physical principles by reconstructing the world system as a whole.[1046]

The new idea of the Whole, as already mentioned, was not based on a consistent monism, but rather on the equally vague and flexible notion of a pulsating plenitude, a content-rich harmony, or a dynamic equilibrium. Pope's reflections on this merit special attention, because his popularization of the new idea of the Whole, thanks to the immense popularity of his *Essay on Man* among 18th-century readers,[1047] had a quasi consciousness-forming effect. There we read, for instance: "All are but parts of one stupendous whole / Whose body Nature is, and God the soul".[1048] The approximation of God and world, as it had emerged in Newton's polemic against mechanism, clearly manifests itself here, and it is quite incidental whether Pope literally intended the statement about God as the world soul or whether readers understood it in a strict sense. Assuming a rejection of materialism, Pope's formulations are noteworthy in how they express the elevation or vivification of matter within the framework of the new Whole. Thus he speaks of the "sea of matter," in which forms, like "bubbles," continually emerge and vanish,[1049] or sees "matter with

1044 *Optics* III, Qu. 28 (= *Opera* IV, 237).
1045 *Optics* III, Qu. 31 (= *Opera* IV, 242).
1046 *Principia* III (= II, 549).
1047 On the several French translations of the *Essay*, each of which saw multiple editions, see the summary by Audra, *Les traductions françaises de Pope*, xii.
1048 *Epistle I*, vv. 267 f.; cf. III, vv. 22 f.
1049 *Epistle III*, vv. 17–21.

various life endu'd"[1050] or "all matter quick, and bursting into birth".[1051] All this can be voiced so boldly only because the new idea of the Whole—due to its primary significance for the efforts of reformed theology to overcome the crisis of the 17th century—serves as the foundation of a theodicy, which in turn neutralizes the elevation of matter or prevents it from ending in materialism. Under the influence of the prevailing worldview interpretation of Newton, the traditional theological view—that the Fall had knocked nature in general, and human nature in particular, off its original course—is replaced by the conviction that nature reflects not disorder resulting from the Fall, but on the contrary the order of divine law.[1052] In this sense, as Kant wrote in his private notes, "God [is] justified through Newton".[1053] The concept of order, on which the theodicy of reformed theology rested, in turn offered a suitable framework for integrating all components of the Newtonian synthesis—whereby it remained flexible enough to allow tactically expedient interpretations, even retractions.

These advantages of syncretism contributed to the popularity of Pope's *Essay*. We shall not examine here in further detail how he not only, as just seen, brings God and world closer together, but at the same time subjects the latter absolutely to the commands of the former —[1054]only to then transfer this ambivalent overall conception of the relationship between spirit and sensuality to other levels as well (e.g., moral philosophy).[1055] Particularly interesting with regard to the structure and function of the new idea of the Whole—and its significance for the parallel emergence of an Enlightenment conception of nature—are Pope's reflections on the position of man within the chain of beings. As is well known, this latter concept was interpreted in various ways in the 18th century, since it possessed both an optimistic and a pessimistic aspect (on the one hand, the reassuring perfection of the world; on the other, the seemingly fatalistic immutability of its

1050 *Epistle III*, v. 13.
1051 *Epistle I*, v. 234.
1052 Madelém, *The Anatomy of the World*, 45 ff., 9 ff., 37.
1053 *AA* XX, 58 f.
1054 *Epistle I*, vv. 156 ff.
1055 See the discussion of the relation between reason and passion or self-love in *Epistle II* vv. 53 ff. Cf. also Chapter VI, Section 3 c.

laws), and could thus serve different intentions.[1056] Here too Pope sketches what he considers a viable compromise. First, he emphasizes man's belonging to the "general order"[1057] and from there denies that man is the purpose of creation;[1058] for the idea of the chain of beings implies that every being contributes equally to the continuity of the chain and thus shares equally in its perfection. But Pope does not draw atheist consequences from this, instead arriving at a pious moral: man should not want to know everything, science must limit itself, and man should never forget his imperfection.[1059] The ambiguity of the synthesis brought about under the aegis of reformed theology becomes apparent when one considers how much value later materialists placed on rejecting anthropocentrism, or how antitheological and antimetaphysical a scope agnosticism eventually acquired: the pair Montaigne–Pascal had already shown that this constellation was present by the late 16th and early 17th century. Yet unlike Pascal, Pope does not rest in pessimistically tinged humility—which illustrates the profound difference between older apologetics and the motives of reformed theology. For in the chain of beings, man occupies a position only beneath purely spiritual beings. Placed between God and the animal,[1060] man is granted dominion over lifeless and living nature.[1061]

If one keeps the overall structure in view, the double intention becomes clear: to avoid hubris, and at the same time to preserve the modern claim of man's dominion over nature—which, broadly speaking, corresponds to the conciliatory efforts of reformed theology and of Newtonian "religion." This combination was to have important consequences for the general character of the Enlightenment concept of nature—if one wishes to contrast it, for purposes of ideal-typical comparison, with that of the Renaissance or with the mechanistic one. We already noted[1062] that the Enlightenment, at least in its dualistic–

1056 Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 186 ff.
1057 *Epistle I*, vv. 171 f.
1058 *Epistle I*, vv. 131 ff.
1059 *Epistle II* vv. 19 ff. On the same motifs in Pope's *Dunciad*, see Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse*, 133 ff.
1060 *Epistle II*, v. 8.
1061 *Epistle I*, vv. 231 f.
1062 See above, Chapter III, Section 1.

vacillating main current, undertakes a fusion of the two theses: that man is nature, and that man rules over nature. The nature-mother of the Renaissance and the nature-machine of the 17th century merge into the *bonne nature* of the Enlightenment. From this results a conception of man's position such that he can neither feel himself as a child in the womb of nature, nor regard it as a dead machine. The 18th century calls the nature of the 16th at least partially back to life, without renouncing the claim to dominion that became fully conscious only through mechanism.[1063] Broadly speaking, this combination corresponds to the intellectual physiognomy of the Newtonian synthesis, insofar as it brought hermetic and mechanistic traditions to a common denominator.

b) The new idea of the Whole, Cartesianism, Scholasticism, and the partial reversal of alliances

The convergence—if not entanglement—of mind and sensuality within the new idea of the Whole, and the actual prioritization of the ontological standpoint despite the rejection of "metaphysics" and the presence of polemical agnosticism, required the existence of a stable formal framework within which this constellation of thought could be presented as a concept with maximum clarity and as a weapon with maximum effectiveness. This framework is provided by the concept of *Nature*. This is all the more understandable since the harmonious model of nature had already been deployed in the 17th century as a counterweight to the chaos of the religious wars. But now the concept of nature changes in the direction of the (radical) rehabilitation of sensuality and the new idea of the Whole. Nature is no longer the sum of mathematically captured order, but the sum of the various dimensions of (unified) being. Nature as mere order stood one level below. It did not carry its own ground of existence within itself, but relied on the intellect in two ways: ontologically (as the creation of God, who also assumed the role of *primum movens*) and epistemologically (as something graspable through mathematical method). This double dependence of nature on the intellect is now

1063 See the excellent essay by Lenoble, *L'évolution de l'idée de "nature" ...*, esp. 124 f., 126. Lenoble aptly emphasizes the mutual dependence of scientific, artistic, and philosophical conceptions of nature (111).

rendered obsolete through the radical rehabilitation of sensuality and the rejection of exclusively mathematical method. The mathematically deductive construction of the Whole corresponded to an epistemological intellectualism, and at the same time to the mechanization and ideological sterility of matter. Now, on the contrary, the epistemological entanglement of intellect and experience is transposed to the ontological level and interpreted as an entanglement of spirit and sensuality. The Whole is henceforth (at least in tendency) not merely a construct of knowledge but also, and above all, content—a real convergence of all dimensions of being. In comparison, the mathematical-mechanical Whole appeared partial and therefore fictitious, as it was closed in upon itself and viewed from outside by the spirit (whether divine or scientific). Now, however, the spirit is also in the world, both cosmologically (from this perspective, it is incidental whether one speaks of the omnipresence of God or of the immanence of motion in matter) and epistemologically: the scientific spirit has its field of activity solely in experience, and is connected to it just as God is to matter. This does not necessarily mean that the spirit dissolves entirely into sensuality. In the dominant Enlightenment current, it retains its autonomy (always with an eye toward the moral consequences), but only under the condition that, as divine spirit, it does not arbitrarily throw nature into disorder, and as scientific spirit, it holds fast to empirical reality. God ensures, whether once or continuously, the order of the world, and the necessary scientific abstraction in turn serves to bring order to knowledge.

The ontological tendency of the 17th century, which hesitantly found expression in the thesis that nature is only rationally comprehensible because reason is originally embedded in it as a law, is now radicalized—and at the same time de-intellectualized—through the convergence of spirit and sensuality, or of God and world. At the end of this development stands the thesis: if motion or force is an original property of matter, then nature contains its own ground within itself. This could not arise from the mechanistic conception of natural order, because the clockwork still requires movement—that is, a clockmaker—even if it stands on the threshold of autonomy. Only through the radical elevation of sensuality does nature finally cease to be primarily (created) order and become, in practice—largely in spite of contrary intentions and declarations—a divinity, whose chief

attributes naturally also include harmony. This important shift in perspective is overlooked when the mechanization of the worldview is taken as a sufficient condition for the displacement of God or for materialism. Mechanization could, in logical terms, at most imply deism, but not the denial of a personal God or the deification of nature. Descartes saw this correctly, and that is why he could have a clear conscience regarding the religious implications of his mechanism. Moreover, he vigorously opposed any personification of nature that might have led to its autonomy or deification. Thus, he speaks ironically of the *"sapientissima ista Natura, quae non nisi ex humanae cogitationis desipientia habet originem"* ["that most wise Nature, which has no origin other than from the folly of human thought"],[1064] while in *Le Monde* he declares that by nature he does not mean "*quelque Deesse, ou quelque autre sorte de puissance imaginaire*".[1065] (Galileo too considered nature an "*osservantissima esecutrice degli ordini di Dio*".[1066]) This ontological categorization of nature derived directly from the dualistic principle of Cartesian metaphysics. The equation of matter with extension implied that the former possessed no inherent force, or that it had to remain indifferent to motion; only God, therefore, could impart and sustain motion.[1067]

The course of overall development in the 18th century can be vividly grasped if we consider it from the perspective of the changing relationship between scholasticism and Cartesianism. As we know, Descartes arrived at the sharp separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* in opposition to scholasticism. Unlike most Enlightenment thinkers, he had a precise understanding of its content and intellectual structure, and it was precisely for this reason that he did not see its essence in abstract syllogistics, but rather in its pronounced affinity for empiricism—which, epistemologically, appeared in the rejection of innate ideas and, ontologically, in the teleological connection of matter and form. To the extent that scholastic doctrine relied on the assumption of an internal principle of motion in natural bodies, or on a

1064 *AT* XI, 524.
1065 *AT* XI, 37.
1066 Letter to Castelli from 21.12.1613 = *Opere* V, 282.
1067 It is no coincidence that this point is once again fundamentally clarified in Descartes' reply to More's objections. See the letter from August 1649 = *AT* V, 404.

teleology, Descartes had to advocate a purely mechanistic conception of nature in order to confront it. Since teleologically guided immanent motion represented a kind of soul of the body, matter had to be completely stripped of spirit. Teleology and empiricism could only be countered by mechanism on the one hand, and intellectualism on the other. What appeared in the 18th century as Cartesian disjointed dualism was in fact the sharpened polemical consequence of Cartesianism itself. For this reason alone, a rejection of Cartesianism had to entail a factual—though unconscious and never admitted—return to scholastic fundamental positions. The empiricist mainstream of the Enlightenment turns away from the Platonic-mathematical sharp separation of spirit and matter and, almost imperceptibly, despite all protestations, appropriates the Aristotelian-scholastic pair "form-matter." Thus, matter and motion are brought closer together; in explicitly monistic conceptions they even appear as inseparable. It is therefore no coincidence that La Mettrie supports the immanence of *force motrice* in matter by explicitly appealing to the doctrine of substantial forms, and in the same context attacks Descartes, while praising the acuity of the "S*cholastiques Chrétiens des derniers siècles*".[1068] This use of Aristotelian-scholastic terminology in an overt or covert anti-theological sense had already disturbed the Church during the Renaissance.[1069] Charron was by no means the first to infer from the Aristotelian unity of form and matter the identity of body and soul.[1070] But not only the internally driven motion of bodies via the unity of form and matter, also the *qualitates occultae* could serve to demonstrate that matter is something more than extension; Le Clerc, for instance, appeals to them in his debate with Bayle when seeking arguments against Cartesian mechanism.[1071] Voltaire, too, refers his fictitious orthodox-theological dialogue partner—who sees the enrichment of matter with properties as a step toward atheism—to the

1068 *Traité de l'Âme*, Chap. V (= *Oeuvres* I, 63, 65, 66). In *L'Homme Machine* (*Oeuvres* I, 344) La Mettrie indeed rejects the doctrine of substantial forms, though the structure of his position does not fundamentally change. He simply sets aside the metaphysical terminology of the *Traité* by foregrounding the polemic against "hypotheses" in general, especially "metaphysical" ones.
1069 See above, Chapter II, Section 2 b.
1070 "L'âme donc est toute en tout le corps", *De la sagesse* I, 8 (= I, 70 f.).
1071 226 Roger, *Les sciences de la vie* ...

teachings of the Church Fathers.[1072] In all of these claims, however, it must not be overlooked that their interpretation of scholastic teachings is quite loose, especially since they ignore the differences among individual scholastic thinkers as well as the specific details and difficulties of the Aristotelian view itself. Rather, they acknowledge only those scholastic teachings that are currently useful, reducing them to an acceptable and undifferentiated minimum in order to invoke them and thereby acquire, not least, an alibi—while at the same time excluding certain theoretical possibilities from the outset, such as the approach of *formae substantiales* to *formae separatae*. Likewise, at least outside of physico-theological circles, scarcely a word is said about the *causae finales*. And yet, despite the elimination of divine *causae finales* in the strict sense—that is, final causes acting from outside—a kind of inner teleology in matter had to be tacitly assumed in order to explain its structuring or transformation according to certain regularities, i.e., precisely in order to attribute autonomy to it. One might finally even ask to what extent the new principle of motion, according to which force is regarded as the cause of motion, represents an (unconscious) re-connection to the scholastic doctrine of *impetus*, especially since mechanistic (Cartesian) physics had no concept at all of inherent *vires motrices*.[1073]

The revival of scholastic topoi among the opponents of Cartesianism understandably gave the Neo-Cartesians cause to celebrate a belated, though sterile, triumph. Above all, attraction appeared as a disguised *qualitas occulta*, and anti-Cartesianism as a return to scholasticism and simultaneously as a precursor to atheism (precisely the same accusations the Cartesians themselves had once had to endure; that the accusations contradict one another only matters if one is concerned with logical rather than polemical consistency). As a defender of Cartesianism, who was invested in the demotion of the concept of attraction, Fontenelle warns against attributing to it "*quelque réalité*"; on the other hand, he counters Newton's claim that attraction is not a *qualitas occulta*—since not its causes but only its observable effects are in question—with the double question: "*Mais ce que les scolastiques appelaient qualités occultes, n'étaient-ce pas des causes? Ils voyaient bien aussi les effets. D'ailleurs ces causes occultes que Newton n'a*

1072 *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, article "Matière" = *OC* XX, 50.

1073 Maier, *Vorläufer Galileis ...*, 65 f.; *Zwischen Philosophie und Mechanik*, 380 ff.

pas trouvées, croyait-il que d'autres les trouvassent?[1074]" But even non-Cartesian opponents of materialism could no longer so easily align themselves with scholasticism under the new circumstances; on the contrary, they turned the actual or supposed affinity with scholastic doctrines into a chief argument against theories suspected of materialism. For Bonnet, for example, Maupertuis' and Buffon's theory of epigenesis is merely a dangerous revival of the *qualitates occultae*.[1075] Nevertheless, such accusations had as little effect on Enlightenment anti-Cartesians as their factual closeness to certain scholastic topoi inspired any gratitude toward scholasticism. Instead, an unconscious mental mechanism was at work here, one that served to prevent ideological hostility from being softened by purely logical reflection. On the Enlightenment side, a certain image of scholasticism was constructed that made it as easy as possible to define one's relationship to it without facing logical complications. According to this view, "scholasticism" meant—besides belief in authority—primarily that kind of syllogistics which pays little heed to experience, arbitrarily blends physics and metaphysics, or derives the former from the latter. From this perspective, even Descartes had to appear as a kind of scholastic. Abstract mathematical procedure was largely equated with poor syllogistics, and the very unity of physics and metaphysics—which Descartes had negatively adopted from scholasticism—was now rejected (this, however, applied only to opponents, since the Enlighteners were generally quite willing to combine physics, as they understood it, with a secularized metaphysics tailored to their own preferences). The very aspect of scholasticism that Descartes had directly opposed is minimized. Thus, for d'Alembert, for example, the empiricist epistemology of scholasticism is nothing more than a consequence of its devotion to antiquity or to Aristotle, without any

1074 *Éloge de Newton*, in: *Fontenelle und die Aufklärung*, 242, 246.

1075 Against Buffon, Bonnet notes that epigenesis appears as an inexplicable product of a *force secrète* (*Considérations sur les corps organisés*, Ch. VII §121 = I, 96 f.). Characteristically, Bonnet also draws a parallel between the epigenesis thesis and doctrines such as that of the world soul or the *nature plastique* (*op. cit.*, Ch. VIII §123 = I, 99 f.). For him, of course, the force of attraction cannot be inherent in matter (*op. cit.*, Ch. VI §82 = I, 63). This complex of thought can only be fully understood in conjunction with the analyses of Section 4 b of this chapter.

real philosophical significance.[1076] Through this logically highly dubious detour, Descartes and scholasticism could be attacked simultaneously, without needing to acknowledge the constitutive importance of Descartes' battle against scholasticism for his work. Once again, polemical consistency proved stronger than logical. Particularly blatant, however, was the sacrifice of the logical on the altar of the polemical when prominent Enlighteners, in their militant zeal against the Jesuits, did not hesitate to ally themselves with the Jansenists—even though their deism stood closest to the scholastic notion of God's binding to the laws of reason.[1077]

It is intellectually quite interesting that pious proponents of mechanistic natural philosophy had already warned early on against the possibility of scholastic topoi being used for anti-theological purposes. Above all, they were troubled by the plasticity of the Aristotelian concept of nature, which could lend itself to personification or even deification of nature. In any case, Boyle—who in a characteristic passage combats both the independence of substantial forms and the thesis of their origin from the "power of matter," attributing both to scholasticism—[1078]explicitly links the deification of nature to the ambiguity of the concept of nature. In a treatise, reportedly written as early as 1666 and published about twenty years later, Boyle polemicizes against the atheists: they "ascribe so much to nature, that they think it needless to have recourse to a deity for the giving an account of the phaenomena of the universe".[1079] At the same time, Boyle wants to alert Christian "naturists" to the dangers of such an approach.[1080] When atheists or Aristotelians attribute everything to nature, one can hardly discern "that, whatever their words sometimes be, the agency of God is little taken notice of in their thoughts".[1081] One no longer knows whether the nature so extensively spoken of is a material being, or rather an immaterial being or a deity.[1082] Boyle targets primarily Aristotle and

1076 *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 185 f.
1077 See also Chapter VI, Section 5.
1078 *The Origin of Forms and Qualities* = *Works* III, 38.
1079 *A Free Enquiry into the Received Notion of Nature* = *Works* V, 158.
1080 *loc. cit.*, 191.
1081 *loc. cit.*, 162.
1082 *loc. cit.*, 190.

his school. Aristotle, he says, is the originator of the erroneous "opinion of the eternity of the world",[1083] and he could maintain this because he started from a false definition of nature, which presents nature as a principle of motion.[1084] Boyle lists a total of eight primary meanings of the concept of nature and observes that, because of this ambiguity, expressions containing this term are "either not intelligible, or not proper, or not true".[1085] He proposes alternative expressions, insisting above all—understandably—that *natura naturans* should once and for all be replaced by God.[1086] He summarizes Aristotle's various statements about nature and concludes that Aristotle considers nature "a most wise being, that does nothing in vain etc. etc.[1087]" Against this, he argues that nature cannot be a principle of motion[1088] and compares "the frame of the world" to a "great, … pregnant automaton, that … is such an engine, as comprises or consists of several lesser engines".[1089] Nature has no autonomy; it receives motion and laws of motion from God. Even less can one speak of a wisdom of nature, as its often faulty functioning shows. Boyle lists several examples of such faultiness, and we should not blame him for considering the irregularities in natural phenomena incompatible with the notion of a wise nature, even if he refrains from drawing similar conclusions regarding the power and wisdom of God.

Under these circumstances, it was no wonder that the most consistent refutations of Spinozism toward the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries came from Cartesian pens.[1090] The Cartesian view of the impotence of nature became increasingly

1083 *loc. cit.*, 163.
1084 *loc. cit.*, 171.
1085 *loc. cit.*, 167 f.
1086 loc. cit.
1087 *loc. cit.*, 174.
1088 *loc. cit.*, 244, 170.
1089 *loc. cit.*, 179, cf. the provisional definition of nature on p. 177.
1090 On this, see Balz, *Cartesian Refutations of Spinoza*, esp. 462 f., 473 f., 481. Balz emphasizes the functional transformation of Cartesianism as well as the moral-philosophical significance of the separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. For further details on Cartesian refutations of Spinoza, see Spink, *French Free-Thought*, 257 ff. (cf. 148). The interesting controversy between the mechanist Sturm and the Aristotelian Schelhammer on the occasion of Boyle's treatise is described by Baku, *Der Streit über den Naturbegriff*, 171 ff.

persuasive in Christian-philosophical circles, which viewed the synthetic boldness of Reformed theology with suspicion, if not outright rejection. Thus, Malebranche[1091] and Berkeley[1092] jointly reject the scholastic-Aristotelian concept of nature by opposing any elevation of the *causae secundae*—with the typical arbitrary combinability of thought motifs depending not only on the general but also on the specific opponent at hand, as Malebranche attributes the errors of Scholasticism to its empiricist epistemology, while Berkeley, on the contrary, traces the same errors to its abandonment.[1093] Boyle's conception of nature was also acknowledged by French conservatives; in the aim of deploying mechanistic natural philosophy as effectively as possible against the new idea of the Whole or of Nature, even Christian apologists went so far as to no longer place the orthodox notion of miracle—barely compatible with mechanism—at the forefront of their argumentation.[1094] Alongside the Cartesianism of the academicians, there now emerged an apologetic Cartesianism of the cardinals,[1095] represented with dignity even in Italy by Cardinal Gerdil, for example.[1096] Most striking, however, is the change of heart among many Jesuits, who—after having themselves supported the empiricism of Locke and Condillac against Cartesianism—were seized by a late regret in view of the increasingly evident moral-philosophical consequences of the overthrow of innate ideas, and helped the Cartesians achieve victory at the Sorbonne.[1097] The publication of the first volumes of the *Encyclopédie* and the open anti-Cartesianism of the Encyclopedists were likely the negative causes of this new Jesuit stance. What they now found appealing in Descartes is stated openly by P. Para, who, although he still scholastically rejects the identification of matter and extension or the purely mechanical nature of animals, nevertheless corrects scholastic positions at least insofar as

1091 *Recherche de la Vérité*, Éclaircissement XV (= *OC* III, 203 ff., 207, 223 f.).
1092 *Notebook A* (= *Works* I, 65, 91).
1093 *loc. cit.*, 94.
1094 Ehrard, *L'Idée de Nature*, 56 ff., 83 ff.
1095 According to Vernières' apt expression, *Spinoza et la pensée française ...*, 257.
1096 Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, II, 534 ff. On Gerdil's Cartesian refutation of Spinozism, see Balz, *Cartesian Refutations*, 465 ff.
1097 *op. cit.* I, 576 ff.; II, 546 ff., 623 ff.

he emphasizes that the senses are only the "occasional cause" of our knowledge, and that God is the sole *causa efficiens* of all motion.[1098]

The alliance with conservative theologians extended the life of Cartesianism, such that d'Alembert had to regretfully observe that in France Cartesianism had been adopted too late and retained for too long.[1099] Nevertheless, the late reconciliation with Scholasticism—or, more precisely, with the Scholastics—was from the outset subject to limits. This was not only due to the vast contentual differences but equally to the underlying worldview itself. In both France and England, the existential intensity of Cartesian rationalism—namely, the call for radical doubt and independent thinking—had already been attentively received and gratefully enlisted in the fight against Scholasticism. What had instilled fear in Bossuet was, of course, welcome to the Enlighteners. Voltaire certainly represented the prevailing opinion when he described Cartesian physics and metaphysics as a *roman ingénieux* on the one hand, while on the other hand crediting the philosopher with having destroyed old chimeras and taught his contemporaries to think for themselves.[1100] Similar sentiments appear in d'Alembert's almost lyrical praise,[1101] and, as is well known, even the young Locke perceived Descartes in this same liberatory sense.[1102] Generally, it is the case that Enlighteners, like their opponents, isolated one aspect of Cartesianism and discarded the rest. The ignoble death of Cartesianism—accelerated by the early failure of attempts to reconcile it with Newtonian physics—[1103]was not directly caused by the fact that different parties dissected it at will to exploit the part they found useful. Rather, this was a symptom of Cartesianism's original inability to establish itself in as closed a form as possible. It should first be noted that it did not even manage to monopolize the entire domain of mechanistic natural philosophy, though it had influenced it as a whole. This can be seen, for instance, in the 17th-century chemists who adopted Cartesianism in order to

1098 Sortais, *Le Cartésianisme chez les Jésuites ...*, 92, 90 f.
1099 *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 281; cf. *Éléments ...*, I (= *Oeuvres* II, 8).
1100 *Lettres philosophiques* XIV (= *OC* XXII, 131).
1101 *Discours préliminaire* (= *Oeuvres* I, 271 f.).
1102 Aaron, *Locke*, 13.
1103 Brunet, *L'introduction des théories de Newton ...*, 272 ff.

advance criticism of *substantial forms*, *qualitates occultae*, and alchemy —[1104]i.e., to advance the mechanistic approach in general. Most of the time, however, they did so freely, for example by mixing Cartesian and Gassendist topoi.[1105] The rejection of atomism,[1106] arising from the identification of matter and extension, was not taken literally, especially since it paradoxically seemed to confirm the alchemists: if the essence of a body consists solely in extension, then it can be transformed almost arbitrarily into any other.[1107] Nor did physicians and physiologists commit themselves en masse or unconditionally to Cartesianism. Many iatrochemists were influenced by it in part, but not converted, and even iatromechanism was not exclusively tied to Descartes, as it represented a continuation of older currents.[1108] Given this overall situation, Leibniz could write in 1692 that the true Cartesians formed only a shortsighted "sect," which is why almost all discoveries had been made by non-Cartesians.[1109] While this involves a certain polemical exaggeration, the remark can at least be negatively confirmed by pointing out that scientifically fruitful enterprises by Cartesians were only possible in connection with an experimental spirit that, for the most part, derived from non-Cartesian sources. This spirit was not without effect even among the most intellectualist representatives of Dutch Cartesianism,[1110] and it increasingly prevailed in the still-young learned societies.[1111] Cartesians in the strict sense, such as Régis and Rohault, had to distance themselves from the one-sided mathematico-deductive method under the pressure

1104 How closely the critique of scholasticism was tied, in Descartes' own view, to the rejection of alchemy, etc., is described by Gouhier, *Les premières pensées de Descartes*, 110 ff., who notes that Descartes had already heard the Jesuits' warnings about alchemists during his school years.

1105 Metzger, *Les doctrines chimiques en France ...*, 423 ff. The influence of Gassendi is also emphasized by Beyer, *Du Cartésianisme à la philosophie des Lumières*, esp. 28 ff.

1106 See above, Chapter III, Section 2.

1107 Metzger, *Les doctrines chimiques ...*, 244 ff.

1108 See the second part of the treatise by Berthier, *Le mécanisme cartésien et la physiologie ...*, esp. 22, 30 f., 33 ff.

1109 Letter to Nicaise from 5.6.1692 (= *Phil. Schr.* II, 534).

1110 Ruestow, *Physics at 17th and 18th century Leiden*, 99 ff.

1111 Brown, *Scientific Organizations ...*, passim.

of the times.[1112] And Fontenelle's example ultimately shows that, especially since the end of the 17th century, remaining stuck in Cartesian orthodoxy—even in refined form—had become impossible: not only did he praise the experimental method and lack sympathy for the excesses of Cartesian mathematization, but, as his polemics against followers of Malebranche show, he could no longer accept Cartesianism as a philosophical whole.[1113] This shattering of the Cartesian idea of the Whole was the most important consequence of the triumph of experimentalism or empiricism; henceforth, general mechanism was neglected in favor of studying the specific mechanism of concrete phenomena.[1114] This tore apart the original concept, whose persuasiveness, according to Descartes' own intent, was meant to lie in the explanation of the general. This fragmentation of the Cartesian Whole paved the way for the new idea of the Whole described above. –

4. The Multiple Roots and Anti-Cartesian Character of Enlightenment Materialism

a) Voluntary and Involuntary Forerunners of Materialism

Materialism in the Age of Enlightenment is rooted in several schools of thought which, though often significantly divergent from one another, all reject the dualistic principle of Cartesian metaphysics. In the vast majority of cases, they have no intention of promoting materialism; yet from their anti-Cartesian stance emerge monistic conceptual structures which can, directly or indirectly, be placed at the service of the most consistent monism of the 18th century—namely, materialism. As the most consistent monism, materialism thus becomes the natural heir to the monistic currents of the era.

To infer from this that materialism constitutes the culmination of the Enlightenment would be just as mistaken as to deny either the

1112 Mouy, *Le développement de la physique cartésienne*, 126, 165, cf. 89, 76.
1113 Marsak, *Cartesianism in Fontenelle and French Science*, 55 ff., 52.
1114 Roger, *Sciences de la vie ...*, 223.

legitimacy of its presence in the 18th century or its logically coherent derivation from the trend toward the radical rehabilitation of sensibility. One cannot speak of any culmination here simply because there was no such culmination—only a plurality of competing positions, with a main current of Enlightenment thought striving to neutralize anti-Cartesian monistic tendencies by incorporating them into the familiar dualism of vacillation. As for the intellectual-historical legitimacy of Enlightenment materialism, it is highly symbolic that the terms "*Materialist*" and "*Materialism*" were coined precisely on the threshold of the Enlightenment.[1115]

In terms of its logical structure, materialism means the elimination of God and the theological worldview by asserting the self-motion or autonomy of matter. Yet as a concrete phenomenon in intellectual history, the classical materialism of the Enlightenment (referring here, despite their differences, to La Mettrie, Diderot, and Holbach) does not emerge as a mere assertoric and speculative declaration of this principle in the heat of anti-theological struggle, but rather as a considered engagement with questions that were, among other things, raised by the development of the natural sciences—and simultaneously as an appropriation of ideas, many of which were not originally materialist.

There can be no doubt that the radical anti-theological orientation not only guides the treatment of scientific questions from behind the scenes, but also determines the criteria for how foreign—or even hostile—ideas are utilized. This dependence of intellectual content on underlying orientation, which by no means applies only to materialists, concerns the structural level, whereas from a strictly intellectual-historical perspective, what matters is the observation that the materials employed by this orientation in order to rationalize itself stem, in general, from the thought world of the Enlightenment.

The possibility of a (partial) interweaving between a materialist-atheistic orientation and Enlightenment thought in the broad sense is itself grounded in the fact that this orientation also has roots in the

1115 Since the time of Boyle (see for example *Excellency and Grounds of the Mech. Hypothesis* = *Works* IV, 75), the adjective first appears and is increasingly used; Leibniz even considers "Materialists" and "Idealists" as the two great philosophical schools, following Epicurus and Plato (*Réponse aux Réflexions de Bayle* (1702) = *Phil. Schr.* IV, 560).

anti-theological, emancipatory message of major parts of the Enlightenment and could appeal to that message—even though its radicalism was by no means typical. In both respects, then, materialism represents a fully legitimate—one could even say organic—component of the Enlightenment.

A recollection of a certain feature of Meslier's work may clarify the essential difference between the assertoric formulation of the materialist principle of matter's self-motion, motivated by anti-theological intent, and the classically rooted materialism of the 18th century. Meslier's argumentation operates consciously and exclusively on the logical-speculative level, and in terms of style at least, it belongs to the 17th century, whose intellectual representatives (Descartes and Malebranche) the evidently under-informed provincial priest confronts.[1116] It may be left undecided why Meslier, otherwise so tenacious in matters of principle, speaks somewhat hesitantly or obscurely of motion, saying it is not "*de l'essence des corps, mais seulement une propriété de leur nature.*[1117]" In any case, for him self-motion is already an established fact, if its assumption entails no logical difficulties, which he then tries to demonstrate by analyzing the logical weaknesses of the opposing view.[1118] Since (*par conséquence*, as Meslier says) materialism is logically consistent and free of contradiction, it must also be accepted.[1119] Under these conditions, the construction of the materialist basic model occurs *a priori*, via the processing of traditional ontological categories.[1120] There are substance and form; substance is matter, whose modes of existence are individual beings, and from the definition of substance it follows that matter is uncreated and the cause of itself.[1121] Meslier lends his *a prioristic* procedure an epistemological foundation when he claims that the doctrine of the single, eternal substance is an insight of *"raison*

1116 The education of Meslier is in fact not only unsystematic but primarily of scholastic-theological origin, see Ehrard, *Vrai Meslier*, 296 f.

1117 *Mémoire* § 71 (= II, 242).

1118 *Mémoire* § 71 (= II, 241 ff.).

1119 *Mémoire* §§ 65, 66 (= II, 179, 181).

1120 Haar already emphasized this aspect in *Meslier*, 30 ff.; cf. Deprun, *Meslier et l'héritage scholastique*, 35 ff.

1121 *Mémoire* § 71 (= II, 245 note.

naturelle",[1122] or one of those "*idées nécessaires, que nous ne saurions effacer de notre esprit, qui soient véritablement une preuve convaincante de l'existence de ces choses que nous concevons par telles idées*.[1123]" The truth of things is grasped through "*idées claires et nettes*.[1124]" Meslier's Cartesianism[1125] even extends to invoking the ontological argument, attempting to demonstrate the identity of Being and matter by withdrawing the predicate of perfection (which was attributed to God in the ontological proof) from Being, such that Being can no longer be equated with God.[1126]

Now it is precisely Meslier's epistemological alignment with Descartes that sharpens the ontological-contentual opposition to him. If materialist monism is established *a priori*, then it is *a priori* incompatible with the likewise *a priori* established Cartesian dualism. The opposition to Cartesianism here is therefore not methodological (as it also was for the classical materialists), but purely structural, and concerns the question of the separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The unity of substance allows—on purely logical grounds (i.e., independently of empirically observable facts, which Meslier only touches on in passing)—no distinction, let alone opposition, between soul and matter.[1127] Thinking does not constitute the essence, but merely a modification of this soul,[1128] which itself depends on the condition of the body.[1129] Thinking, knowing, judging are all modifications *de l'être qui vit et qui pense*.[1130] If the Cartesians had been consistent, they would have had to ascribe self-motion to their otherwise automatically functioning mechanism in order to eliminate the dualism—which, according to Meslier, is *a priori* untenable.[1131] External direction of the mechanism, or by God, would degrade

1122 *Mémoire* § 79 (= II, 402 f.).
1123 *Mémoire* § 79 (= II, 410).
1124 *Mémoire* § 80 (= II, 419).
1125 Deprun, *Meslier et l'héritage cartésien*, esp. 450 ff.
1126 *Mémoire* § 81 (= II, 429 ff.
1127 *Mémoire* § 91 (= III, 65).
1128 *Mémoire* § 91 (= III, 55 f.).
1129 *Mémoire* § 91 (= III, 75).
1130 *Mémoire* § 91 (= III, 88).
1131 *Mémoire* §§ 84, 85 (= II, 471 ff.).

humans into puppets.[1132] In this logically somewhat surprising turn, the strong moral impulse becomes evident that inspires Meslier's *a priori* materialism. For Meslier, materialism above all represents the ontological foundation of his argumentative struggle against theology and religion, which in fact dominates his work (also in quantitative terms). Materialism here primarily means atheism—that is, a demand to end all the evils that religion, this deception by priests in alliance with the powerful,[1133] brings upon human society. The representatives of classical materialism, of course, follow Meslier in this reflection, and also structurally had to adopt his anti-Cartesian monism; but this was a matter of primary logical necessity, not the result of direct influence. For, as said, mature materialism is something more than a mere declaration of its ontological principle with anti-theological intent, and for that reason owes Meslier hardly anything. One could even say that materialism would have remained an obscure marginal phenomenon of the Enlightenment had it, like Meslier, not drawn upon modern, primarily scientific, thought. Not only did Meslier's *Opus*, despite its prior reputation, become known too late in wider circles to have inspired a materialist movement; it was also used mainly with anti-religious intent. Voltaire, who otherwise disapproved of Meslier's atheism,[1134] limited himself to publishing *Extraits*,[1135] from which one could even gather that Meslier was a supporter of natural religion.[1136] Meanwhile, in Holbach's tract *Le bon sens du Curé J. Meslier*, which is meant as religious criticism, the materialist principle of the self-motion of matter appears only as an additional—though important—argument for the abolition of socially ruinous religion.[1137]

With regard to the difference in speculative argumentative style between Meslier and the intellectual physiognomy of classical materialism, the latter's attitude toward Spinoza's work becomes easier to understand. The approval of Spinozist monism or of the doctrine of the One Substance was likewise a logical necessity for the materialists,

1132 *Mémoire* § 71 (= II, 254 f.).
1133 *Mémoire* §§ 2, 5, 41 (= I, 10 f., 49 ff.; II, 15 f.).
1134 *Lettres ... sur Rabelais et sur d'autres auteurs ...*, VII (= *Oeuvres* XXVI, 512).
1135 *Oeuvres* XXVI, 293 ff. The *Extraits* appeared in 1762.
1136 Haar, *Meslier*, 38 ff., and especially Morehouse, *Voltaire and Meslier*, passim.
1137 Chap. XXXIX–XLI = 58 ff.

not a formative literary influence. One should therefore refrain from fundamentally interpreting classical materialism as an adoption or extension of Spinozist positions.[1138] The existing parallel is structurally determined, entirely independent of the fact that the materialists gladly registered and exploited Spinoza's clear formulation of the monistic principle and its particular implications. But a broader direct influence cannot be demonstrated. For instance, the rejection of *causae finales* by the materialists[1139] cannot be traced back to Spinoza's remarks on the subject,[1140] since this had already become a commonplace at the latest with Bacon.[1141] Even La Mettrie's praise for Spinoza's view of the strict necessity in the course of nature[1142] must be classified as agreement rather than influence. The same La Mettrie, moreover, declares quite frankly in the same text what separates him from Spinoza; to him, Spinoza is above all a speculative systematizer —"*son athéisme ressemble assez bien au labyrinthe de Dédale*." As is well known, Condillac had shortly before harshly attacked Spinozism and the same style of argumentation that we also encounter in Meslier,[1143] and in this, he finds La Mettrie's warmest approval.[1144] The article "Spinosisme" in the *Encyclopédie*, likely written by Diderot, makes it unmistakably clear how pronounced this distance from Spinoza was felt to be. The author does speak of Spinozism as a unified position—by which he clearly means the consistent monist approach in its various versions—but he distinguishes between the old and the new, the latter of which, unlike the former, is based on the assumption of a *matière sensible*. This keyword reveals the special relationship of classical materialism especially to the findings of the new biology, and

1138 This was emphasized by Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 555 note 1, polemically against Naville. Wartofsky commits the error of failing to properly distinguish between structural and intellectual similarities in his portrayal of the commonalities between Diderot and Spinoza, see *Diderot and the Development of Materialistic Monism*, 282 ff.

1139 La Mettrie, *Syst. d'Épicure* XVIII (= *Oeuvres* I, 236); Diderot, *Éléments de Physique* = *OC*, IX, 271 f.; Holbach, *Syst. de la Nature*, II, 213 ff.

1140 *Ethica* I, Appendix = *Opera* II, 77 ff.

1141 It is precisely to Bacon that Diderot refers in this context, *Mélanges* = *OC*, IX, 438.

1142 *Abrégé des Systèmes*, VII = *Oeuvres* I, 216.

1143 *Traité des Systèmes*, X = *Oeuvres* I, 169 ff.

1144 *Abrégé des Systèmes*, VII = *Oeuvres* I, 215.

indeed in open opposition to the speculations of a *philosophia more geometrico demonstrata*. Thus, the materially-oriented neo-Spinozists do not want to be speculative thinkers, but rather scholars in closest touch with the latest developments in the natural sciences.[1145]

This ambivalent relationship of mature materialism to Spinoza—while simultaneously attempting to bypass all "speculations" and connect to natural science—is already prefigured in Toland, whose *Letters* thus seem much more modern than Meslier's *Mémoire*, even though they are roughly two decades older. First, it must be noted that in Toland as well, the materialist principle of matter as the only self-moving substance appears as an ontologically formulated intensification of the anti-theological struggle—in fact, as a reversal of what, in Toland's eyes, constitutes the essence of theological spiritualism. He describes the genesis of superstition and of belief in the immortality of the soul (always against the backdrop of the cunning collaboration between priests and rulers)[1146] as a process by which self-motion—and thus complete independence from the material world—was attributed to the soul;[1147] the same schema was then transferred to the relation between God and the world.[1148] Toland now inverts this hierarchy by attributing self-motion not to the soul but to matter, thereby eliminating soul and belief in its immortality—i.e., superstition and the rule founded on it—in one stroke. The entire universe is always in motion.[1149] Activity belongs not only to the definition, but to the very essence of matter,[1150] and thus one can explain its differentiation or division.[1151] It is precisely at this point that criticism of Spinoza arises: Spinoza, in attempting to overcome Cartesian dualism with Cartesian concepts, attributes both extension and thought to the One Substance, but not self-motion.[1152] This is not about "local motion" but about the moving force or activity

1145 Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 529. The passage from the article "Spinosisme" just cited is quoted there.
1146 Letter III = p. 104.
1147 Letter II = p. 54.
1148 Letter IV = p. 142.
1149 Letter V = p. 188.
1150 *loc. cit.*, 165.
1151 *loc. cit.*, 169.
1152 Letter IV = p. 138 f.

itself;[1153] Spinoza, however, speaks of local motion without stating its cause. He thereby indeed omits the traditional concept of the moving God, but does not say a word about the inherence of the moving force in matter.[1154]

Toland's critique rests on the unspoken—though clearly implied and, for our context, important—assumption that the immaturity of Spinoza's theory of motion results from his estrangement from empirical, scientific procedure. Only this makes it understandable why Toland praises Newton for two things: his adherence to observations and facts,[1155] the corollary of which is his rejection of abstract mathematical or "hypothetical" method,[1156] and at the same time, decisive steps toward the thesis of inherence. For Toland, Newton's theory of absolute motion—which, like absolute space and absolute time, is supposed to be imperceptible—proves that the (perceptible) rest of bodies is merely apparent, and thus confirms the reality of eternal motion.[1157] Even gravity, he believes, allows one to infer the inherence of motion.[1158] Whether Toland interprets Newton legitimately (especially regarding absolute motion) may remain undecided here. What is intellectually significant is his effort to detach the monist-materialist principle from the worldview of speculative metaphysics and to connect it with modern natural science. Spinoza's monism, despite Toland's criticisms, will remain structurally influential for him, as the *Pantheisticon* (published in 1720) shows; but here we are dealing with a Spinoza who seems to have been familiar with Newton and Leibniz.[1159] This attitude of Toland's also had a direct impact on the representatives of classical materialism. Diderot owed to the *Letters* (translated by Holbach)[1160] arguments concerning

1153 *loc. cit.*, 140 f.
1154 *loc. cit.*, 143.
1155 Letter V = p. 177.
1156 *loc. cit.*, 179.
1157 *loc. cit.*, 201 f.
1158 *loc. cit.*, 205 f.
1159 According to a fine remark by Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 358. The influence of Bruno has been described in detail by Jacob, *The Newtonians*, esp. 231 ff., 247 f.
1160 The translation appeared in 1768 in London; see Naville, *Holbach*, 428, and cf. *Syst. de la Nature*, I, 83 note.

the self-motion of matter and the transition from the inorganic to the organic,[1161] as well as—most likely—a significant part of the critical reception of Spinoza,[1162] which is also evident in the article *Spinosa* in the *Encyclopédie* (incidentally a teleologically intended text aiming to refute Spinoza from a theist perspective), where it expresses itself as a rejection of Spinoza's a priori–speculative method and conceptuality.[1163]

Due to the difference in character between classical materialism and Spinozism—or predecessors like Meslier—classical materialism must be defined as the product of a fusion between the anti-theologically motivated principle of the self-motion of the one (material) substance and newer developments in the natural sciences, particularly in biology. The intellectual legitimacy—and explosiveness—of the materialist current lies in this fusion. Before we examine it more closely, we want to illustrate the entanglement of materialism with the Age of Enlightenment by the way it placed otherwise non-materialist ideas in its service. As already follows from our definition of classical materialism, the use of such ideas was not constitutive for it. Yet it remains historically revealing that the anti-Cartesianism which characterizes the Enlightenment as a whole provided a framework within which such combinations or *mésalliances* became possible. As a consistent monism, materialism had to be the antithesis of consistent Cartesian dualism. Thus, to avoid materialism, anti-Cartesians could either remain within the "dualism of oscillation" or seek refuge in various forms of spiritualism or panpsychism. This latter option, however, was far more influential for Renaissance natural philosophy, where—as we know—[1164]its dangerous consequences had already become apparent. The analogous constellation in the 18th century is conditioned by the fact that panpsychism must stand in direct opposition to Cartesian mechanism, which postulates the complete de-ensoulment of matter. Yet materialism too attacks precisely the Cartesian conception of matter, which is closely tied to the dualism of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Materialism and panpsychism, through

1161 Crocker, *Toland et le matérialisme de Diderot*, esp. 291, 293; cf. also notes 35 and 36.

1162 Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 600.

1163 *OC*, XVII, 193 f.

1164 See above, Chapter II, Section 2 b.

their monistic orientation, both challenge the separation of *res extensa* from mind. The materialistically intended self-motion of matter appears, in terms of this structural similarity, as a reanimation of matter—in other words: from the materialist point of view (i.e., under the assumption that matter is the only substance), panpsychism simply confirms the principle of self-motion of matter, whether organic or inorganic.

Given these connections, it is not surprising that Holbach, for instance, is in no way disturbed by Stahl's panpsychism when he draws on his ideas. For Holbach, Stahl is above all the opponent of Cartesian mechanism,[1165] which de-ensouls or renders matter passive. Stahl's thought, with its panpsychist background (stemming from Renaissance natural philosophy, which experienced a final revival during the general revolt against Cartesianism, its most resolute foe), indeed produced several views that were of great interest to materialists. What is meant here is not only the theory of the superiority of the organic over the mechanical, whereby the latter was not abolished but rather significantly dynamized[1166] (through this detour, incidentally, emerging materialism was supplied with a new, anti-Cartesian concept of mechanism—see next section), but also the theory of affinities. While it could not explain all known phenomena, it was nevertheless gladly adopted due to its usefulness in combating Cartesianism—often with reference to Newton and his theory of attraction.[1167] Holbach adopts the affinity theory,[1168] in which the interlinking of matter and force seems to have progressed to the point that only a single step remains to reach the thesis of self-motion; however, he does not investigate its panpsychist presuppositions. In Diderot, by contrast, the insights of the new chemistry—particularly the affinity theory—[1169]are clearly tied to panpsychist theses. Since the transition from the inorganic to the organic, or from matter to mind, was the most difficult and simultaneously the most crucial problem for materialist monism, the hypothesis that sensitivity is an inherent property of matter seemed to offer a way out. To attribute an elemental

1165 Naville, *Holbach*, 193; on Holbach's translations of Stahl's writings, 426.
1166 Metzger, *Newton-Stahl-Boerhaave*, 116.
1167 *op. cit.*, 139 ff., esp. 145, 148.
1168 *Syst. de la Nature*, I, 112.
1169 *Interprétation de la Nature* XXXVI = *OC* II, 31 f.

soul to inorganic matter in this way, however, implied a radical transformation of the concept of soul in contrast to that of the theological tradition—for example, the idea that a condition was conceivable in which soul and matter were scarcely distinguishable from one another. Diderot formulates his panpsychist hypothesis (he writes that even stones might feel)[1170] precisely in the context of attempting to explain the transition from the inorganic to the organic, using the example of the transformation of a piece of marble into an edible substance.[1171] The tight entanglement of mind and matter that Diderot emphasizes is further supported by the panpsychistically tinged thesis that everything in the universe participates in everything else.[1172] It may not be entirely superfluous here to recall the use Toland made of panpsychist theses precisely in the most consistent formulation of his monism.[1173]

As stated, the appropriated elements of panpsychism were not constitutive for classical materialism, but rather welcome tools—yet their use shows how vast the arsenal was that materialist monism could draw upon. Still, La Mettrie's rejection of Stahl's panpsychism indicates that recourse to such positions was not an absolute logical necessity for the materialists. Panpsychism could be freely employed so long as it did not entail an implicit resurrection of theological metaphysics of the spirit—and it is precisely this that La Mettrie reproaches Stahl for.[1174] As in the natural philosophy of the Renaissance, panpsychism in the 18th century also had a Janus face. Indeed, it was occasionally adopted even by thinkers who were quite modern or scientifically inclined, but who—out of moral reservations —did not want to give their own monistic positions a materialist turn, and instead preferred to invent as many gradations of soul as were necessary to secure the uniqueness of the human intellect as guarantor of human freedom, while still attributing animation to inorganic matter. An example of this stance is Maupertuis, whose panpsychist

1170 *Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot* = *OC* II, 139.

1171 *loc. cit.*, 107 f.

1172 *Rêve de d'Alembert* = *OC* II, 139.

1173 In *Pantheisticon* appear formulations such as: "nihil in terra non organicum est" (21), or: "Incrementum lapides recipiunt decrementum ut reliqua vegetantia" (20).

1174 *Traité de l'Âme* XII § II = *Oeuvres* I, 129; *Homme Machine* = *Oeuvres* I, 341.

doctrines and their role within his biology will be discussed in the next section. It should be noted in advance that Diderot identified as the ultimate consequence of Maupertuis' panpsychism the identification of God and world, or of soul and body—[1175]an interpretation Maupertuis resisted,[1176] since his panpsychism was meant to avoid precisely this uncomfortable problem, not to covertly advocate a private materialism. Still, this did not prevent the general effect of his panpsychist doctrine from benefiting materialism.[1177]

Leibniz had clearly recognized the danger posed by panpsychism in general[1178] and by Stahl's doctrine in particular[1179] for the concept of a personal God. That nevertheless important aspects of his own physics and ontology—albeit torn from their context—could be used in a materialist sense[1180] is another vivid example of the effect of the heterogony of ends in intellectual history: namely, that the trend prevailing at a given time is the one able to reinterpret or repurpose foreign ideas in accordance with its own goals, such that these ideas ultimately serve aims that may even contradict those of their original authors. A specific feature of this process is that thinkers who initially seem to fall into oblivion due to the outdated nature of their general stance are later rediscovered—not for their deliberate overall worldview, but because certain elements of their thought can be used as building blocks in systems of (very) different architecture. The prerequisite for this new relevance is, in other words, the fragmentation of the original unity of thought and at least a relative isolation of what is newly useful—something that must go hand in hand with a more or less marked indifference toward the conscious overall stance of the thinker in question (that this indifference is often sold as the "discovery" of the "true" meaning of a work changes little). In Leibniz's case as well, the century's general indifference to his

1175 *Interprétation de la Nature*, L = *OC* II, 48.

1176 *Réponse aux objections de M. Diderot* = *Oeuvres* II, 185 ff.

1177 On this generally, see Ehrard, *Idée de Nature*, 224 ff.

1178 *Considérations sur les Principes de Vie*, *Phil. Schr.* VI, 539 f., 549.

1179 *Animadversiones circa asseniones aliquas theoriae medicae Stahlii*, *Opera*, II, 2, 131 ff.

1180 For understanding the context discussed here, it may be useful to refer to modern attempts to interpret Leibniz on the basis of dialectical materialism in the Marxist-Leninist sense, see e.g. Holz, *Leibniz*, esp. 23 ff., 59 ff.

overall worldview—consider, for example, the fate of the *préétablie harmonie*—contrasts with the frequent use and reinterpretation of isolated ideas. In France, after 1720, he received little attention, being regarded mainly as a speculative metaphysician—a view explicitly held by Condillac, for example.[1181] He was generally remembered as the proponent of optimistic theodicy only in connection with the debates triggered by Pope's *Essay on Man*, and some Catholics significantly viewed Leibniz's optimism as symptomatic of a side of his thinking they suspected of materialism.[1182] Regardless of whether optimism and materialism were compatible—as the pessimistic theorists of original sin denied—at least one aspect of Leibniz's thought did indeed have an effect in France in connection with emerging materialism, and the explanation for this is straightforward: it was his anti-Cartesian stance, which was interpreted (indirectly) as a reevaluation of matter. For Leibniz questioned the identity of matter and extension—through his concept of force. Since he saw the fundamental error of mechanism in the identification of force with quantity of motion, he had to develop a dynamics, defining *vis* as mv^2, and considering mv valid only for statics. The concept of force was meant—in other words—to overcome the Cartesian indifference of matter to motion—[1183]and more than that, as we will soon see.

The differences between Leibniz's doctrine of force and Newton's[1184] did not prevent their combined impact. For the attention of their readers was not directed at the differences or their now largely faded theological-metaphysical background, but rather at their shared rejection of Cartesian dualism and of Cartesian matter's indifference to motion—a commonality that, from a purely intellectual-historical perspective, might perhaps be explained by their mutual (though differently motivated and expressed) efforts to reconcile mechanistic positions with elements of Renaissance natural philosophy.[1185]

1181 *Traité des Systèmes*, VIII = *Oeuvres* I, 151 ff.

1182 On this, see Barber, *Leibniz in France*, 97 ff., 111 ff., 147 ff. Barber's book does not consider the aspect of Leibniz's influence we are discussing here; cf. the critical remarks by Roger, *Sciences de la Vie*, 461 note 10 and 479 note 110.

1183 Westfall, *Force*, 284 ff., 315 ff.

1184 On this see Brunschvicg, *Expérience humaine et causalité physique*, 242 ff., 252.

1185 Westfall, *Force*, 323, 450, 398. On the influence of Renaissance natural

Leibniz's objective proximity to Newton, at the crucial point of anti-Cartesian orientation, becomes especially clear when one compares his views on what should be considered the positive aspect of Newtonianism with the corresponding views of a largely Cartesian-aligned thinker like Huygens.[1186] A paradox of particular interest to us lies in the fact that, precisely in attempting to refute what he saw as theologically dangerous implications of Newtonian physics, Leibniz arrived at theses that—at least at first glance—seemed even *more* "materialist." As we know, Newton's position implied an ontological superiority of space over matter, which also manifested in the fact that forces were not attributed to matter itself but were to unfold through the medium of space; the action-at-a-distance character of the forces and the assumption of the vacuum were accompanied by the ontological inferiority of matter.[1187] This ontological superiority of space, however, formed the basis for its theologically suspect entanglement with God. To combat this, Leibniz had to replace the vacuum with a plenum and thereby endow matter itself with force. Matter, he argued against the vacuum, constituted the necessary domain of operation for God's wisdom and power—thus explicitly opposing Newton's thesis of the ontological inferiority of matter.[1188] And when Clarke responded that God could also act upon immaterial things,[1189] Leibniz replied that "toute substance créée est accompagnée de matière";[1190] only God stands "au dessus de toute la matière".[1191] This simultaneous rejection of the vacuum theory and of Cartesian dualism meant that the now all-encompassing matter had to be more than mere extension. The concept of force was introduced with the explicit ambition to build a bridge between mind and sense, metaphysics and physics.[1192] What consequences this might have is

philosophy on Leibniz, see Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, 263 ff.

1186 Rosenberger, *Newton*, 247.

1187 McGuire, *Body and Void*, 232.

1188 Second letter to Clarke, *Phil. Schr.* VII, 356.

1189 Second reply, *loc. cit.*, 360.

1190 Third letter to Clarke, *loc. cit.*, 365.

1191 *Considérations sur les Principes de Vie*, *Phil. Schr.* VI, 546.

1192 *Animadversio in partem generalem Principiorum Cartesianorum* § 64 = *Phil. Schr.* IV, 391: "Nam praeter extensionem ... inest materiae vis ipsa seu agendi potentia quae transitum fecit a Metaphysica ad naturam, a materialibus ad immaterialia."

hinted at by Maupertuis' remark that Leibniz's law of conservation of force would expel God from the world no less than Descartes' law of conservation of motion.[1193]

To complete our picture of Leibniz's intellectual-historical influence in the direction of emerging materialism, we should recall his Aristotelian-scholastic-inspired response to Boyle in the debate over the status of nature,[1194] which—under the given circumstances—had at least an indirect tendency to encourage, as Boyle feared, the elevation of nature at the expense of God. But the materialists also referred to Leibniz directly, and not merely on marginal points. For instance, La Mettrie cites him in support of his thesis of an immanent *force motrice*, indeed even a *force sensitive*, in matter;[1195] if the concept of soul had any meaning at all, he could only recognize in it Leibniz's *force motrice*.[1196] Though La Mettrie considered the monads a fantastical invention—[1197]in agreement here with Maupertuis—[1198] Diderot, likely with the aforementioned aspects of Leibniz's physics in mind, could assert their essential identity with Hobbes' thinking matter.[1199] This becomes clearer in light of the connection (admitted indirectly by Leibniz himself) between his *Monadology* and developments in biology,[1200] which contributed decisively to the replacement of the rigid atom with the dynamic-organic molecule.[1201] This same connection is evident when one considers that a pioneer of the new biology, such as Needham, draws on Leibnizian arguments precisely to combat the Cartesian conception of matter.[1202]

1193 *Essai de Cosmologie*, Second Part = *Oeuvres* I, 43 f.

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1195 *Traité de l'Âme*, VI = *Oeuvres* I, 66, 68; cf. *Abrégé des Systèmes*, III = I, 201, where the principle of motion is simply called "Nature," indicating the already discussed use of Aristotelian-scholastic motifs in a materialist sense.

1196 *Homme Machine* = *Oeuvres* I, 343.

1197 *Abrégé des Systèmes* III = *Oeuvres* I, 200.

1198 *Lettre* VIII = *Oeuvres* II, 262 ff.

1199 See article "Leibnitzianisme" in the *Encyclopédie* = *OC* XV, 457; the emphasis on the concept of *entelechy* (apparently following Leibniz, see e.g. the short text from May 1702 in *Phil. Schr.* IV, 393 ff.) again illustrates the materialist appropriation of the anti-Cartesian aspect of Scholasticism.

1200 *Système nouveau de la nature etc.* = *Phil. Schr.* IV, 480.

1201 Casini, *Concetto di "Molecola organica"*, esp. 363.

1202 Roger, *Sciences de la vie*, 502 f.

b) Classical materialism, the new biology, and the rejection of mechanism

It was certainly no coincidence that the advances of biology decisively shaped the physiognomy of classical materialism. For the main problem—or rather, the principal difficulty—of materialism in the 18th century, as in earlier and later times, lay in explaining the transition from the inorganic to the organic, from which one hoped to derive an interpretation (more precisely: a reinterpretation-away) of mental phenomena. From a materialist perspective, it had to be shown, in other words, that this transition occurs solely through the activity of autonomously moving matter, and that consequently, the mental is merely an aspect or stage of the material—which, of course, amounts to its abolition, at least in its traditional form. In the field of biology (precisely because it lies, as it were, between the two realms of the mental and the material and could thus potentially encompass or unify both), the ontological elevation of matter becomes much more vividly and drastically apparent than in physics or chemistry, and this explains the particular sympathies of the materialists for this new discipline. More closely examined, the two pillars of the new biology—namely, the theory of epigenesis and the early steps toward evolutionism—are nothing other than direct conclusions from the assumption of matter that originally contains within itself an immeasurable abundance of possibilities for unfolding, or at least creates them in perpetual self-motion. Such matter, however, cannot be reduced to mere extension. Although the founders of the new biology did not have to be materialists, and in fact were not, they nevertheless had to oppose Cartesian dualism and mechanism from the outset, since both were most intimately linked to the identification of matter with extension.

Since the sharpness of the dualism—that is, the ontological purity of spirit—in the Cartesian system formed the reverse side of the perfection or completeness of the mechanism, such that this could be cited as an argument for God's existence and activity, the reference to obvious imperfections of the machine or of nature served to undermine the dualism and the concept of God supported by it. A paradox thus occurs: nature is presented as (partially) irrational in order to achieve complete autonomy and independence from God; this

was polemically unavoidable so long as the infallibility of the natural mechanism was regarded as evidence of Providence or the wisdom of God (notably, Cartesian theology—due to its dualistic foundation and despite the Cartesian rejection of the *causae finales*—was often and silently lumped together with the Church's concept of God; accordingly, on the other side, there was a growing preference among some theologians for the neat Cartesian separation of God and world). In the context of the struggle against Cartesianism and its (alleged) theological consequences, we can thus explain the persistence with which representatives of the new biology insist on the accidental and the unpredictable in the natural order. Maupertuis sees in chance that force which allows nature's innate possibilities to unfold.[1203] The readiness with which the materialists adopt such theses is characteristic. "Un rien dérange l'optique de la nature," writes La Mettrie,[1204] in order, in the same context, to oppose to teleology—or the assumption of purposeful divine action in the world—the view that chance accomplishes more than wisdom,[1205] from which he ultimately concludes that even intelligent beings could arise from blind causes.[1206] For Diderot too, the breakdown of natural order—for example through the appearance of monsters—is a clear sign against the claim of a wise guidance of nature by God.[1207] The polemical background of such statements becomes visible when we recall the decisiveness with which Diderot considers total anarchy in nature an "impossibility"—under the condition, however, that order is understood as the exclusive effect of the *qualité primitive de la matière*.[1208] Holbach likewise cites disorder in nature as an argument against God,[1209] but on the other hand, he maintains that monsters don't truly exist if one takes not the habits of our imagination, but the fact of natural necessity as the standard.[1210]

1203 *Dissertation sur l'origine des noirs*, Ch. III = cited in Ehrard, *Idée de Nature*, 230.
1204 *Système d'Épicure* XXII = *Oeuvres* I, 237.
1205 *op. cit.*, XVIII = I, 236.
1206 *op. cit.*, XXVIII = I, 239.
1207 *Lettres sur les Aveugles* = *OC*, I, 310.
1208 *Interprétation de la Nature* XXXVI = *OC* II, 32.
1209 *Système de la Nature*, I, 135.
1210 *op. cit.*, I, 126 f.

The strange love of anti- or non-theologically inclined natural scientists for monsters and deformities had another reason. Namely, it contained a polemical edge against the preexistence thesis, which itself implied the passivity of matter, since matter, according to this thesis, could produce nothing but what God had placed in it from the moment of creation; this applied not only to species but also to the individual beings belonging to them.[1211] Within this view, the omnipotence of God and the mechanical order of natural processes were to be combined: this was a version of that alliance between theology and Cartesianism which, as noted, frequently led materialists to equate the two. Deviations from the normal type of each species, however, could hardly be satisfactorily explained in this way, and therefore monsters constitute for Maupertuis a decisive argument against the preexistence thesis[1212] and for the assumption of an independent development of life according to its own laws.[1213] According to the theory of epigenesis, by which each individual arises through the gradual formation of its parts *ex novo*, Maupertuis contrasts the "*systèmes de développements*" (meaning the unfolding of preexisting seeds, eggs, or so-called *animaux spermatiques*) with the "*productions nouvelles*.[1214]" But only a dynamic and content-rich matter can produce something new. Maupertuis, who avoids a direct attack on God—whether out of conviction or tactical caution—therefore proposes the conciliatory hypothesis that God endowed matter at the moment of creation with a wealth of properties, and then left it to its own inherent possibilities for development[1215]. How closely developments in biology were tied to the changing conception of matter in physics is shown by Maupertuis' attempt to derive epigenesis

1211 On the controversy surrounding the preexistence thesis in general, see Ehrard, *Idée de Nature*, 211 ff.; on the differences between preexistence and preformation, as well as on the theological relevance and background of the question, see Roger, *Sciences de la vie*, 325 ff.; on the origin and versions of the preformation theory, see Guyenot, *Sciences de la vie*, 256 ff., 296 ff., who also provides the necessary information on the significance of the discovery of the microscope and the work of Malpighi, Hooker, etc., 105 ff., 189 ff.

1212 *Venus phys.* XIV; *Syst. de la Nature* XI, XXXV–XXXVII (= *Oeuvres* II, 71 ff., 144 f., 159 ff.).

1213 *Syst. de la Nature* XXVII, XLIX (= *Oeuvres* II, 154 f., 169).

1214 *Venus phys.* XII, XVI (= *Oeuvres* II, 64 f., 80 ff.).

1215 *Système de la Nature* XXVII (= *Oeuvres* II, 154 f.).

from the concept of attraction.[1216] Although he later distances himself from this,[1217] it remains significant for the range of possible pathways toward the ontological elevation of matter that his mature panpsychist position includes no concessions to dualism. On the contrary, his declared impossibility of life originating from mechanical causes[1218] amounts to a fusion of life and matter already on the lowest level. Something of the original assumption of attractive and repulsive forces remains, however, when Maupertuis describes that "*principe d'intelligence*" which he posits in matter as both "*désir*" and "*aversion*," to which he also adds "*mémoire*.[1219]" Elsewhere he speaks of "*instinct*"[1220] or of "*la sensation la plus obscure et la plus sourde*.[1221]" This brings the inorganic and the organic closer together, such that the former represents only the hardened and thus no longer productive part of an otherwise unified matter.[1222] This affirmation of continuity *ipso facto* undermines Maupertuis' cautious but abrupt claim that the formation of the first organic individuals was "*miraculeuse*,[1223]" though he allows the boundary between miracle and chance to remain fluid.[1224] Finally, it should be noted that Maupertuis also expected from panpsychism not only a bridging of the gap between mind and matter, but also an explanation of higher mental functions (the unified treatment of both problems also characterizes the materialist approach, insofar as intellect is supposed to arise through the refinement of matter). The minimal perceptive capacity of those "*éléments*" whose composition gives rise to organic matter forms the primary foundation of a "*perception unique, beaucoup plus forte, beaucoup plus parfaite*"; in the process, the independence of the individual elements within the new organic whole must disappear.[1225] Diderot will draw centrally on this idea, as we shall soon see.

1216 *Venus phys.* XVII (= *Oeuvres* II, 88 f.).
1217 *Système de la Nature* IV, XIV (= *Oeuvres* II, 141, 146 ff.).
1218 *op. cit.* XXVIII, LXIV (= II, 155 f., 182).
1219 *op. cit.* XIV, cf. LV (= II, 147, cf. 174).
1220 *op. cit.* LX (= II, 179).
1221 *Réponse à Diderot* = *Oeuvres* II, 213.
1222 *Système de la Nature* XLIX (= *Oeuvres* II, 169).
1223 *op. cit.* XXXI (= II, 158).
1224 *op. cit.* XLV (= II, 164 f.).
1225 *op. cit.* LI–LIV (= II, 170 ff.).

Maupertuis refers in his later works to Buffon's refutation of the preexistence thesis, though he also points out his own prior work in the same direction.[1226] What matters here is not questions of priority, but the internal or logically necessitated agreement between the positions represented by both naturalists. Precisely where Buffon pronounces his decisive verdict against the preexistence doctrine, the concept of "*matière productive*" comes to the fore.[1227] And since he had shortly before declared that the *causae finales* were irrelevant for natural science,[1228] it must be concluded that the origin and development of species are to be attributed to the creative activity of matter. Only such an at least implicit assumption—which in turn cannot do without the general elevation of matter (not just of the organic)—makes Buffon's proposed rapprochement of the organic and inorganic logically plausible and intelligible. It is precisely on the basis of this rapprochement, incidentally, that Buffon unequivocally rejects belief in the metaphysical origin of the soul: "*le vivant et l'animé, au lieu d'être un degré métaphysique des êtres, est une propriété physique de la matière*.[1229]" Any matter can thus become organic, since there is no such thing as dead matter in the absolute sense,[1230] and the organic is even the most ordinary and least costly product of nature's economy.[1231] The more natural the organism becomes, the less life needs to be regarded as a divine gift. Buffon dares to make such claims even though he by no means shares Maupertuis' panpsychism—[1232]which once again indicates how secondary panpsychist convictions themselves were, and how significant, conversely, were the patterns of thought that took shape under panpsychist guise, thus somewhat protected from the suspicion of materialism, only to shortly thereafter become autonomous. From an intellectual-historical and structural perspective, the specific details of each interpretation of the transition from the

1226 *Lettre* XIV (= *Oeuvres* II, 302 ff.). On the relations between the two, see Brunet, *Maupertuis*, 326 ff.

1227 *Hist. des animaux*, *Récapitulation* = *Oeuvres* 287 A–289 B.

1228 *op. cit.* V = *Oeuvres* 284 B.

1229 *op. cit.* I = *Oeuvres* 238 AB.

1230 *op. cit.* II = *Oeuvres* 245 B: "le brut n'est que le mon," i.e., that which once lived.

1231 *ibid.*

1232 Roger, *Sciences de la vie*, 556 f.

inorganic to the organic are of little importance: the researchers' vacillation between them and their lack of experimental basis or speculative character suggest that behind the persistence with which these theories were nevertheless advanced stood not least the will to construct a coherent new worldview. This vacillation, which in Maupertuis' case appeared in the abandonment of the attraction hypothesis in favor of panpsychism, appears in Buffon as a revision of his original assumption that the *molécules organiques*—i.e., the intermediaries between the organic and the inorganic—arose from the interaction of heat and attraction.[1233] In later years, he came to see this rather as a chemical process.[1234]

The presence of similar or identical patterns of thought among the classical materialists—which, however, does not stem from literary influence, but rather from the internal logic of their style of thinking—is all the more noteworthy given that Maupertuis and Buffon themselves, even at the cost of logical consistency, were not prepared to draw materialist conclusions from the theses discussed above.[1235] It has already been explained why the question of the transition from the inorganic to the organic had to stand at the center of materialist reflection. The topicality of such considerations, occasioned by developments in biology, was in fact acknowledged even by opponents of materialism—demonstrated by the increasing attention they were forced, *nolentes volentes*, to devote to those natural phenomena that seemed to offer a link between matter and mind. Hence the intensity of the controversy sparked by Trembley's polyp, not least in relation to the problem of the soul.[1236] While, for example, the Jesuits and Voltaire, who fought against materialism alongside

1233 The connection between the effect of heat and that force (namely gravity), which, in Buffon's words, functions as the cause of all phenomena in the domain of the inorganic, underscores the interweaving of the inorganic and the organic, see *La Nature, Seconde Vue* = *Oeuvres* 41 B.

1234 *Époques de la Nature*, Fifth Epoch = *Oeuvres* 175 A ("par la chaleur sur les matières ductiles").

1235 Characteristic is the way Maupertuis, immediately after his discussions on the laws of heredity derived purely from biological criteria, hastens to defend free will etc., *Syst. de la Nature*, LVI–LVII (= *Oeuvres*, II, 174 ff.). On Buffon's similar recantations, see Roger, *Sciences de la Vie*, 530 ff.

1236 Vartanian, *Trembley's Polyp*, 264.

them, refused to even recognize the polyp as an animal,[1237] La Mettrie interpreted its ability to reproduce through self-division as the first and decisive step toward the status of an ensouled being—though he declared the soul in the traditional sense to be a fiction. At the same time, La Mettrie invoked the polyp to reject "le système des Naturalistes sur la génération," by which he meant the preexistence theory.[1238] All this was naturally complemented or supported by a theory of the transition from the inorganic to the organic, according to which the latter emerged from the interaction of soil with germs that had matured in the air with the aid of heat.[1239] Once again, it is not the content of the construction that interests us here, but its direction and intent. In any case, the other representatives of classical materialism imagined the crucial transition from the inorganic to the organic in other ways. Yet in Diderot too—who greeted Trembley's discovery with equal attention and enthusiasm as La Mettrie—[1240]the transformation of *matière inerte à l'état sensible* appears in the same context as the rejection of the preexistence theory,[1241] although this time it is understood as the product of a *fermentation*, through which, for example, a pulverized piece of marble might first turn into soil and then, via its assimilation by plants, into edible material, and thus into something organic.[1242] Holbach likewise derives organic life from a *fermentation* that is supposed to take place under the influence of heat.[1243]

The early forms of modern evolutionary thought that began to emerge in 18th-century biology—though they did not yet fully develop—constitute, just like the theory of epigenesis, a logical consequence of the scientific and ontological elevation of matter. One could even say, in a certain sense, that epigenesis is a partial aspect of a vaguely articulated evolutionary conception, or conversely, that evolution is

1237 *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, article "Polypes" = *OC* XX, 240 f.; cf. Vartanian, *Trembley's Polyp*, 284 f.
1238 *Homme Machine* = *Oeuvres* I, 303, 333.
1239 *Système d'Épicure* VII–X = *Oeuvres* I, 231 ff.
1240 *Interprétation de la Nature* XVI = *OC* II, 18; *Éléments de Physique* = *OC* IX, 255.
1241 *Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot* = *OC* II, 110.
1242 *loc. cit.*, 105 ff.
1243 *Système de la Nature*, I, 95.

the extension of epigenesis from the level of the individual organism to the entire scale of species. Thus, epigenesis and evolutionary tendencies appear hand in hand and in the same thinkers—not by coincidence. Just as with epigenesis, evolution is inconceivable without the productivity of matter. Evolution only becomes a meaningful concept as the unfolding and formation of something that is present in a germinal or *potentia* form. The source of these developmental possibilities is matter, while the stages of development represent the successive, gradual realizations of these possibilities—and vice versa: the concept of evolution can be defined as the derivation of the existing diversity of nature from the original possibilities of matter, which moves by its own power. Evolution becomes possible because it presupposes a potentially all-encompassing yet unified substance. Only the monistic background of the concept of evolution makes it intelligible why this idea was taken up primarily by materialists. Buffon, too, owes his intimation of evolutionary thought to the rapprochement between the inorganic and the organic that he envisioned. Under the influence of these intimations, he had to conceive of creation in a way that was somewhat un-Christian and, similar to Maupertuis, claimed that God had brought into being not fixed realities for all time, but rather open possibilities—that is, not "*un certain nombre déterminé d'espèces*," but "*une infinité des combinaisons harmoniques et contraires et une perpétuité de destructions et de renouvellements*".[1244] Nature, he said, is in constant motion;[1245] through various combinations, successes, and failures, through the exhaustion of all possibilities, viable species emerge.[1246] That Buffon nonetheless, in his later years, more or less explicitly defended the immutability of species[1247] only reveals how deep the divide had become—at least objectively—between biological and Christian-worldview convictions.

It is symptomatic that La Mettrie also uses the expression *"infinie des combinaisons"*[1248] to denote that autonomous dynamism unfolded by matter, from which progressively more developed organisms result,

1244 *Hist. naturelle*, 1st Discourse, *De la manière etc.* = *Oeuvres* 9 A.
1245 *Animaux communs aux deux continents* = *Oeuvres* 382 B.
1246 *Hist. nat.*, 1st Discourse, *De la manière etc.* = *Oeuvres* 9 B.
1247 *Époques de la Nature* = *Oeuvres* 125 B.
1248 *Syst. d'Épicure*, XVI (= *Oeuvres* I, 235).

once the imperfection of the first living beings[1249] has been overcome. At a certain stage of this evolution—which, however, has nothing to do with teleology in the scholastic-theological sense—[1250]man appears: *"des animaux à l'homme la transition n'est pas violente"*.[1251] Even the human mind emerges and is perfected in the course of the same process,[1252] under the pressure of needs and emergencies[1253] (as we can see, evolutionism in biology and a genetic approach in epistemology go hand in hand). Diderot indirectly confirms our earlier remark about the logical link between epigenesis and evolution when he writes that entire species could emerge and perish in succession just like the individuals of each species; it is only faith, not natural observation, that supports the assumption of the immutability of species since creation.[1254] In reality, the long sequence of animals could have resulted from *"développements différents d'un seul"*.[1255] The idea of *"nil sub sole novum"* is merely a prejudice or a deception of our finite imagination;[1256] the *"idée de succession"* should, without hesitation, be included in the correct concept of nature.[1257] Our second point about the logical relationship between evolutionism and monism is also indirectly confirmed by Diderot, as he explicitly emphasizes the fluid boundaries between organic and inorganic, between mind and matter, precisely at those points where he affirms the mutability of species.[1258] Holbach, for his part, places particular emphasis on linking the thesis of the emergence of new species[1259] with the claim *"que l'homme est une production faite dans le temps"*.[1260]

The consideration of the temporal aspect, which Holbach directly addresses here, constitutes a decisive innovation in the

1249 *op. cit.*, XIII (= I, 233).
1250 *op. cit.*, XVIII (= I, 236).
1251 *Homme Machine* (= I, 304).
1252 *Syst. d'Épicure* XXVII (= I, 238 f.).
1253 *Homme Plante*, III (= II, 19).
1254 *Interprétation de la Nature* LVIII = *OC* II, 57.
1255 *Éléments de Physiologie* = *OC* IX, 264.
1256 *Interprétation de la Nature* LVII = *OC* II, 55.
1257 *op. cit.* LVIII = *OC* II, 57.
1258 *op. cit.* LVIII = *OC* II, 58 f.; *Rêve de d'Alembert* = *OC* II, 138 f.
1259 *Syst. de la Nature* I, 154.
1260 *op. cit.* I, 150.

emerging concept of evolution. It allows for the reinterpretation of the ancient-Christian—[1261]and still very influential in the 18th century—conception of the chain of being in such a way that it can transform the foundation of fixism into the starting point of evolutionism: this represents another important case of antimaterialist conceptions being used in a materialist sense, which precisely demonstrates the topicality and explosive potential of the materialist approach in the Enlightenment. Buffon,[1262] La Mettrie,[1263] and Diderot[1264] also speak of the chain of being, but the new consideration of the temporal aspect now turns it into the program of a dynamic nature to be realized, whereas in the traditional conception it merely constituted the inventory of a static nature.[1265] In the latter, it was not time but space that was the central category—a marginalization of time that should not surprise, since perfection and immutability were compressed together in the Platonic-Christian ontological hierarchy.[1266] The metaphysical implication is clear. For Bonnet, the principle *natura non facit saltus* ultimately means the exclusion of chance—of unforeseen change not guided by providence; order is allied with God and is itself a fundamental proof of His perfection.[1267] In the new evolutionary perspective, by contrast, the continuity of nature is tied to the idea of a spontaneous transition from matter to mind, or from one species into another.[1268] And the assumption—made possible by consideration of the time dimension—of the chronological priority of matter is meant to reinforce its claim to ontological superiority. What is considered more perfect in idealist terms (mind) here appears as the product of the less perfect (matter), while the presumed chain-like continuity between the two is meant simply to render this production intelligible or to mediate

1261 Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being*, Chapters I and II.

1262 *Hist. nat.*, 1st Discourse, *De la Manière etc.* = *Oeuvres* 10 A.

1263 *Homme Plante* III (= *Oeuvres* II, 17); on La Mettrie's relation to Bonnet, see Vartanian, *Trembley's Polyp*, 265 f., 272 f., 279 f.

1264 *Éléments de Physique* = *OC* IX, 253.

1265 According to an expression by Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being*, 244. Aspects of the conflict between the chain of being and emerging evolutionism in England are discussed by Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress*, 142 ff., 158 ff.

1266 Anderson, *Bonnet's Taxonomy*, 49, 51.

1267 Marx, *Bonnet contre les Lumières*, 143.

1268 Explicitly in Diderot, *Rêve de d'Alembert* = *OC* II, 139.

it. For Bonnet, however, the chain served precisely to fix the position of each being such that no doubt could arise concerning the overall ontological hierarchy. Not only do pure spirits occupy the highest rung, and not only is God Himself situated outside the chain,[1269] but also a quite clear distinction is made between the inorganic and the organic, as well as between the sentient and the non-sentient, for obvious reasons.[1270] How unfavorable the times had become for such a position is revealed precisely by the reservations of Robinet, who otherwise remains committed in principle to the old conception of the chain of being and also supports the theory of preexistence, but who expresses doubts—of all things—about those very separations from which Bonnet hoped to derive the insulation of mind and of God.[1271]

The general difference between materialism and Cartesianism as a whole is, of course, that between monism and dualism—between an intimate interweaving and a sharp separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. What now remains is to define more precisely the specific difference between materialism and Cartesian mechanism. It is already evident that the general difference contains the specific one within itself, because Cartesian dualism necessarily postulates a machine-like behavior of matter, which, being entirely separated from spirit, is therefore dead in itself—just as materialist monism, in order to remain monism (i.e., to derive everything from a single principle), must expand or deepen the concept of matter, which thereby calls into question the Cartesian rigidity of matter as the condition or cause of its machine-like behavior, and thus calls into question (at least extreme) mechanism *eo ipso*. It was therefore a logical necessity that the elevation of matter brought about by the new biology led to a rejection of mechanistic explanations. And given the previously noted close connection between the elevation of matter and epigenesis or evolutionism, it is not surprising that mechanism—wherein the passivity of matter is coupled with the eternal predetermination of the laws of motion by God—became the refuge of fixism and thus the target of the advocates of the new biology.[1272] The direct polemic of

1269 *Contemplation de la Nature*, Second Part, Ch. IX = I, 28 f.

1270 *op. cit.*, Fourth Part, Ch. II = I, 74 f.

1271 Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being*, 269 ff., 275 f.; Marx, *Bonnet contre les Lumières*, 354 ff.; Roger, *Sciences de la Vie*, 652.

1272 On this alliance between fixism and mechanism, which constitutes one

Buffon against Cartesian mechanism[1273] gains its full meaning against this background, even if the logical and intellectual-historical constellation described here may not have been fully or consciously known to the great naturalist. We may nonetheless assume that Diderot had a much sharper eye for the grand lines, and that his rejection of mechanism in biology[1274] was consciously connected with his elevation of matter—which, at times, even extended to a kind of spiritualization of it via the detour of panpsychism.

As far as La Mettrie is concerned, it would be superficial to interpret his provocative use of the word *machine* as an endorsement of Cartesian mechanism.[1275] Given the connections explained above, this would already be impossible due to his emphatic rejection of Cartesian dualism—right at the beginning of *L'Homme Machine*.[1276] Already in

aspect of the partial appropriation of Cartesianism by some theologians in the 18th century, see Roger, *Sciences de la Vie*, 211 f., 216 f.

1273 *Hist. générale des animaux*, III–IV = *Oeuvres* 249 A–250 A, 252 A. Interestingly, Buffon here expands the concept of mechanism by introducing the "forces pénétrantes," whose paradigms are "attraction universelle" and "affinités chimiques."

1274 *Éléments de Physique* = *OC* IX, 262 f.

1275 Vartanian, especially in his work *Diderot and Descartes*, attempted to understand Enlightenment materialism as a further development of Cartesian mechanism. In his important review of that book (esp. 65 f.), Dieckmann already presented the main arguments against it, pointing to Vartanian's impermissible simplification of Cartesianism, the influence of other thinkers (from Locke to Spinoza and Leibniz) on the materialists, and the incompatibility of Cartesianism with transformism. In his later work on La Mettrie's *Homme-Machine*, Vartanian did consider this critique in that he emphasized La Mettrie's essential expansion of the Cartesian concept of the machine (19), yet he stuck to his original thesis, attributing La Mettrie's alleged evolution from a metaphysician of substantial forms (in the *Traité*) to the mechanistic biologist of the *Homme-Machine* in no small part to Descartes' influence (45 ff.). However, the supposed shift in La Mettrie's stance can reasonably be questioned, as Rosenfield already did in *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine*, 142 ff. (against which see Vartanian, *Trembley's Polyp*, 277 note 60; cf. our analysis below). Moreover, Descartes' influence is not proven *eo ipso*, even if one wishes to assume it. — Naville (*Holbach*, 237) has terminologically summarized the difference between old and new/materialist mechanism as one between *mécaniciens géomètres* and *mécaniciens naturalistes*.

1276 *Oeuvres* I, 286.

the *Traité*, La Mettrie opposes the identification of matter with extension[1277] and speaks of "formes mécaniques passives dépendantes de l'étendue":[1278] Cartesian mechanism thus rests on the assumption of the passivity of matter-as-extension, which according to La Mettrie is nevertheless "substance active",[1279] i.e., endowed with "force motrice" and even "faculté sensitive",[1280] and thus does not need to be moved by God.[1281] In *L'Homme Machine*, the self-motion of matter is just as strongly emphasized against the Cartesians.[1282] Only against this background can La Mettrie's use of the term *machine* be understood. After accusing Descartes of denying the capacity for sensation to his machines,[1283] La Mettrie then defines his own use of *machine* in very broad terms: "*être machine*, *sentir*, *penser*, *savoir distinguer le bien du mal"* are, for him, one and the same.[1284] With the image of the machine, La Mettrie primarily wants to suggest the idea of a closed, autonomously functioning whole—and Descartes is praised for nothing more than having tried to exhaust or demonstrate the extreme possibilities of autonomous functioning in a material whole, with La Mettrie—perhaps ironically mocking the theological appropriation of Cartesian theses—adding that just proving such extreme possibilities renders the independent *res cogitans* (and thus dualism) superfluous, or even makes it appear as Descartes' ruse to placate the Church.[1285] Otherwise, Descartes is judged in the typical eighteenth-century manner: a genius, but one who made great errors due to his disregard for experience.[1286] Because La Mettrie understands by *machine-like* any form of autonomous functioning whatsoever, this finds its culmination not in the exclusion, but in the genetically conceived inclusion of the psychic. The central thesis of *L'Homme Machine* thus says nothing more than that psychic states are

1277 *Traité* II–III (= *Oeuvres* I, 55 f., 58).
1278 *op. cit.*, IV (= I, 60).
1279 *op. cit.*, V (= I, 63).
1280 *op. cit.*, III, VI (= I, 60, 67 f.).
1281 *op. cit.*, V (= I, 65).
1282 *Oeuvres* I, 343.
1283 *Traité* VII (= I, 72).
1284 *Homme Machine* = I, 348.
1285 *op. cit.*, 347.
1286 *Traité* XII § IV; *Abrégé des Systèmes* I; *Homme Machine* (= I, 132 ff., 191, 290).

always *correlatifs* of bodily ones—[1287]a point made much more vividly already in the *Traité*.[1288] Only this interpretation of the machine-image makes it understandable why La Mettrie could praise Boerhaave specifically for having explained "*par le seul mécanisme*" all the functions of the rational soul,[1289] or why he applauds Descartes for treating animals as machines,[1290] while at the same time reproaching him for denying them psychic functions. His use of *machine* remains deliberately conceptually loose, and even the freedom La Mettrie took in this respect was not new; even a staunch enemy of materialism like Leibniz had referred to organic beings as machines or *automates naturels*.[1291] The humor-tinged essay *Les animaux plus que machines* clearly shows what La Mettrie aims at when he provocatively uses the word *machine*: namely, the elimination of the soul as a metaphysically rooted or immortal essence. His thought appears vitalist when he dwells on the innate, pulsating vitality of matter as the basis of his biology (and ontology), while his "mechanism" mainly emerges when he wants to eliminate any suspicion that this vitality is ultimately the breath of God: then he must reduce it to scientifically tangible factors, whereby the appeal of the (at least superficially) more determinate clarity of mechanistic interpretations naturally grows stronger. This polemical reduction explains the wavering of La Mettrie—and also of Diderot—between vitalism and mechanism.[1292]

As stated, Cartesian mechanism was based on the assumption of a rigid matter, whose identity with extension made it appear thoroughly homogeneous. The elevation of matter, or rather the derivation of the infinite diversity of the world from it, had to suggest instead the idea that matter was ontologically unified as the one substance, but heterogeneous in its concrete existence. This

1287 I, 298.

1288 *Traité* I = I, 54: "L'âme et le corps ont été faits ensemble dans le même instant, et comme d'un seul coup de pinceau."

1289 *Abrégé des Systèmes* VI = I, 213.

1290 *Homme Machine* = I, 347.

1291 *Monadologie* § 64 = *Phil. Schr.* VI, 618.

1292 On this wavering in La Mettrie, see the remarks by Callot, *Philosophie de la Vie*, 217 ff., 233. Callot believes that only with Holbach are the vitalist elements entirely eliminated in favor of a purely physical conception, 332, 337. On the frequent interweaving of vitalism and mechanism in the 18th century, see the useful comments by Diedunann, *Th. Bordeu*, 71 f.

heterogeneity had in turn to be attributed to the activity of immanent motion; unlike Cartesian motion, which neither alters nor produces but merely maintains what is already homogeneous, the new conception of motion had, in other words, to possess a qualitative aspect. This is what La Mettrie means when he attributes not only self-motion to matter but also the ability to direct the course of its own motion—a notion he connects to the (qualitative) transition from pure matter to intelligence.[1293] Likewise, in Diderot, this specific, i.e., qualitatively conceived, self-motion[1294] bridges the unity of matter-as-substance and the heterogeneous diversity of matter-as-appearance, such that he feels justified in using the expression *matière universelle hétérogène*[1295] and in deriving the *diversité des phénomènes* from this aspect of heterogeneity.[1296] Holbach's reasoning proceeds along similar lines: the specific properties of each body result from its internal movements,[1297] which are specific to it.[1298] Matter therefore does not form a homogeneous mass;[1299] rather, it consists of heterogeneous molecules, whose *circulation continuelle* shapes nature.[1300] These molecules directly recall Leibniz's monads—[1301]and thus the overcoming of seventeenth-century atomism, which had already been critically undermined by the theory of attraction, and which Boerhaave helped to dismantle through his theory of the specific properties of each particle of matter.[1302] In fact, the abandonment of the homogeneity of matter, precisely within the framework of its ontological elevation, implies a break not only with Cartesianism but also with older atomistic mechanism, which had been severely shaken

1293 *Traité* VIII = *Oeuvres* I, 74.

1294 The qualitative aspect of motion in Diderot is rightly emphasized by Wartofsky, *Diderot and the Development of Materialistic Monism*, 302.

1295 *Éléments de Physique*, *OC* IX, 265.

1296 *Interprétation de la Nature* LVIII = *OC* II, 56.

1297 *Système de la Nature*, I, 78.

1298 *op. cit.*, I, 82.

1299 *op. cit.*, I, 94.

1300 *op. cit.*, I, 99 f.

1301 Cf. the note in *op. cit.*, I, 94.

1302 Metzger, *Newton-Stahl-Boerhaave*, 198. Metzger rightly emphasizes Boerhaave's agreement with Stahl on this important point, and their shared recourse to Renaissance natural philosophy and theological mysticism, as well as the fusion of similar motifs with Boerhaave's Newtonian inspiration.

by the theory of attraction.[1303] The dead end into which old atomism was driven by the new conception of matter—and its contrast with the new materialism—is clearly shown in Diderot's *Rêve de d'Alembert*. The possibility of continuity in matter is raised in light of the isolation of atoms, and a solution is found in first dynamizing the atoms or replacing them with molecules, which then form something like a *grappe d'abeilles* (cluster of bees), within which the individual animals merge and thus pave the way for a qualitatively new unity.[1304] (This was originally an idea of Maupertuis,[1305] which Diderot discusses for the first time with explicit reference to him).[1306] This capacity for unification is supported by the assumption that each atom or molecule is a microcosm, which cannot even be identical with itself from one moment to the next.[1307] The differentiated concept of unity developed here is thus closely linked to the thesis of the immanence and permanence of motion. In contrast, the old atomism seemed to fragment the world and simultaneously render it inert. Even with regard to its rejection, then, the difference between the old dualistic mechanism and the new monistic materialism becomes evident.

Around the middle of the 18th century, especially in France, the sense intensified that the paths of new science and religion were increasingly diverging, despite the attempts at mediation inspired by Newtonian or physico-theological thought.[1308] The new biology contributed to this development both in content and psychologically, by provoking a generally skeptical mood[1309] and thereby encouraging a turning away from theological certainties—especially as its findings touched on the central worldview question of humanity's place in the universe. Even Buffon, who at least outwardly tried to harmonize his science with biblical data,[1310] had to openly admit that the "first truth" to result from serious study of nature "peut-être humiliante pour

1303 This was already noted by Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, II, 182 f.
1304 *OC* II, 124, 127.
1305 *Système de la Nature* LIV (= *Oeuvres* II, 172).
1306 *Interprétation de la Nature* L = *OC* II, 47.
1307 *Rêve de d'Alembert* = *OC* II, 132 f., 139.
1308 Mornet, *Sciences de la Nature*, 768 ff.
1309 Roger, *Sciences de la Vie*, 768 ff.
1310 See, for example, the letter to the faculty of theology from 12 March 1751 = *Oeuvres* 108 A–109 A; cf. *Époques de la Nature* = *Oeuvres* 126 A–129 B.

l'homme," since man must now be ranked among the animals.[1311] Buffon did, however, simultaneously insist that there is a "divine spark" in man, making him a "Vassal de Ciel, roi de la Terre",[1312] thus reflecting the dual view of man as nature *and* ruler of nature—a view that characterizes a major current within the Enlightenment. La Mettrie, by contrast, took pleasure in trampling on "la fierté et l'orgueil" of man,[1313] mocking man's self-deification[1314] and assigning him to the same category as the rest of the animals.[1315] Holbach, for his part, expresses only pity for humanity's illusions regarding its status.[1316] The real target of these theses, however, is the notion of man as created in God's image—a notion which gives rise to the paradox that theology, as defender of man's dignity and privileged status, must now appear in the role of advocate for the human, despite having been previously condemned by modern rationalism as hostile and degrading to mankind. What begins to take shape is a kind of alliance between the wing of modern rationalism that sees in man not merely a causally determined natural being but primarily the master of nature, and a reformed theology that, though unable to condone scientific hubris, nevertheless seeks to reconcile humanity's claim to mastery over nature with the doctrine of his divine origin. Work in this direction, however, became increasingly difficult in view of the growing awareness of the dependencies of the spiritual on the sensory in man.

In the spirit of this realization, the spectacular rise of medicine in the 18th century—[1317]closely linked to the expansion of public health systems—[1318]also exerted a long-term influence. Medicine, after all, is

1311 *Hist. naturelle*, 1st Discourse, *De la manière etc.* = *Oeuvres* 10 A.
1312 *Hist. naturelle*, *Première Vue* = *Oeuvres* 33 A.
1313 *Animaux plus que machines* = *Oeuvres* II, 26.
1314 *Homme Plante* = *Oeuvres* II, 18.
1315 *Système d'Épicure* XXXII = *Oeuvres* I, 241.
1316 *Système de la Nature*, I, 155 ff.
1317 On this, see the overviews by Gay, *Science of Freedom*, 12 ff., and Gusdorf, *Dieu-Nature-Homme*, 424 ff. Various aspects of 18th-century medicine are discussed by King in his essay collection *Medical World of the 18th Century*. On the social ascent of physicians and their contribution to the spread of a practically utilitarian spirit, see Delaunay, *Vie médicale*, 421 ff., 472 ff.
1318 A useful overview of medical advances in connection with clinical practice is provided by Wolf, *History of Science etc.*, II, 478 ff.; cf. Shryock,

a science whose object is the study of human sensibility—that is, the examination of man primarily in his sensory dimension. It was certainly no coincidence that, already in the 17th century, sayings like "*bon physicien mauvais chrétien*" or "*sur trois médecins un athée*" had become proverbial,[1319] or that materially inclined physicians like Maubec and Gaultier had actively contributed to the dissolution of Cartesianism.[1320] It is therefore hardly surprising that La Mettrie declared philosophers without medical training to be of little worth,[1321] or that Diderot claimed good metaphysics and morality were hardly possible without anatomy and physiology.[1322] The influence these disciplines had on the thinking of the physician La Mettrie[1323] and the editor of the *Encyclopédie*, who maintained close ties with medical circles,[1324] is well known. Significantly, however, this interest in medicine was by no means limited to the materialists. The physician Locke was, in this respect too, both a forerunner and representative of the Enlightenment.[1325] Mandeville was also a doctor who knew how to combine his medical background with his philosophy.[1326] Voltaire attended Boerhaave's lectures in Leiden and boasted that he had read more medical books than Don Quixote had chivalric romances.[1327] Adam Smith attended Hunter's anatomy lectures, and Hume was friends with Hunter; Hartley, too, was a

Development of Modern Medicine, passim; Fischer, *Geschichte des deutschen Gesundheitswesens*, II, passim; Greenbaum, *Health-care and hospital-building*, esp. 901 ff., 907 ff.

1319 Busson, *Religion des Classiques*, 144 ff.; cf. Pintard, *Libertinage*, 80 f.

1320 Spink, *French Free-Thought*, 219 ff.

1321 *Homme Machine* = *Oeuvres* I, 289.

1322 *Réfutation d'Helvétius* XII = *OC* II, 322.

1323 On the significance of medical experience for La Mettrie, see Callot, *Philosophie de la Vie*, 199 ff.

1324 In general, Roger, *Sciences de la Vie*, 599 ff.; on the intellectual contribution of the physician Bordeu, influenced by Stahl, Boerhaave, etc., to *Le Rêve de d'Alembert*, see Diedunann, *Th. Bordeu*, esp. 103 ff. For details on the involvement of physicians in the *Encyclopédie* and their role in shaping its intellectual profile, see Laignel-Lavastine, *Médecins collaborateurs*, 352 ff., and Astruc, *Sciences médicales*, 359 ff.

1325 Dewhurst, *Locke, Physician and Philosopher*, passim.

1326 Rousseau, *Mandeville and Europe*, esp. 15 f., 17.

1327 Waldinger, *Voltaire and Medicine*, esp. 1790 f.

practicing physician, etc., etc. In relation to the question of the entanglement between mind and matter, this interest in medicine implied two things: it was a symptom both of the (ongoing or completed) ontological *elevation* of matter and of that (epistemologically conceived) turn *away from intellectualism* and *toward empiricism*—a hallmark of the Enlightenment's main current, whose key aspects and consequences we will examine in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Anti-Intellectualist Mainstream of the Enlightenment and Its Concept of Rationalism

1. Preliminary Remark

Without doubt, Locke is the epistemologist who exerted the greatest direct and indirect influence in the Age of Enlightenment. Nevertheless, the talk of the "Age of Locke"—just like the often parallel expression "Age of Newton"—should only be accepted on the basis of necessary differentiations. It is correct if it means in a very general sense that Locke symbolically stands for the extensive turning away from Cartesian intellectualism in the 18th century, or that he forms—from Leibniz and Berkeley to Condillac—the usual positive or negative point of reference for new epistemological approaches. But it is misleading if it is supposed to suggest that Locke's position would provide the ideal type of "the" Enlightenment epistemology. In fact, it represents only a (loose) main current, which was attacked both from the radically empiricist or sensualist side and from the intellectualist side. The former often presents itself as a radicalization or simplification of Locke and aims to blur that strong trace of an independent or self-referential activity of the intellect which became noticeable in Locke's theory of reflection,[1328] that is, to shrink the distance between sensation and reflection to zero.[1329] For this, above all, the theory of association is deployed, which plays a completely subordinate role in Locke, especially since the relevant chapter was only included in the fourth edition of the main work.[1330] But in Hume,

1328 *Essay*, II 1 § 4 (= I, 123 f.); in IV, 21 § 4 Locke says that the mind can refer to itself ("contemplates ... itself").

1329 Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 132.

1330 *Essay*, II, 33; see the editor's note on this passage and cf. Aaron, *Locke*,

reflection and ideas have a fundamentally different status,[1331] and accordingly, interest in associative processes in consciousness grows,[1332] whereby, tellingly, a purely physiological interpretation of these processes is also offered.[1333] Hartley makes association the central point of his psychology and epistemology, by coming to the result that not only does the production of association presuppose the capacity for idea formation, but also the reverse.[1334] It is, finally, well known in what way Condillac tried to "simplify" Locke. By wanting to reduce everything that relates to "entendement" to a single principle,[1335] he must regard sensation alone as the source of knowledge and explicitly deny this function to reflection in contrast to Locke.[1336] "La sensation enveloppe tous les facultés de l'Ame".[1337] But it can only do so thanks to the mediating work of association and of signs, to which Condillac also devotes his detailed attention.[1338] All our knowledge presents a unified chain, which is, however, subdivided;[1339] reflection appears at a certain point of development and presupposes the use of signs.[1340] Interestingly, the entire process of knowledge is rooted in human biostructure, since Condillac asserts that that force (attention) which sets and keeps in motion the

141.

1331 *Treatise* I, 1, 2 = p. 7 ff.

1332 *op. cit*., I, 1, 4; II, 1, 4 and 9 = pp. 10 ff., 283 ff., 305 f. On the great hopes Hume placed on the theory of association and his difficulties in dealing with the problem, see Kemp Smith, *Philosophy of Hume*, 72, 183 ff., 245 ff.

1333 *Treatise* I, 2, 5 = p. 60.

1334 *Observations on Man*, I, 70.

1335 See the subtitle of the first edition (1746) of the *Essai sur les connaissances humaines*.

1336 *Extrait raisonné du Traité des Sensations* = *Oeuvres* I, 325 A. Through this Condillac retracts the thesis of the *Essai*, that the material of our knowledge consists of *sensations* and *opérations de l'âme* (I, 1, Ch. I = *Oeuvres* 6 B). Cf. the implicit critique by Diderot of Condillac's first ("idealist") position, *Lettre sur les Aveugles*, *OC*, I, 304 f.

1337 *Traité des Sensations*, I, Ch. VII = *Oeuvres* 239 B.

1338 *Essai*, I, 2, Ch. III–IV = *Oeuvres* 17 B, 19 A. On the originality and historical conditioning of Condillac's theory of association see Knight, *Géométrie de l'esprit*, 32 f.

1339 *ibid.* (17 B).

1340 *op. cit*., I, 2, Ch. V = *Oeuvres* 22 A–23 B.

associative operations of the soul is intertwined with "plaisir et douleur" or with "besoins".[1341] Thus, an epistemology had been developed that a materialist could fully approve. La Mettrie indeed pays great tribute to Locke (and that is characteristic of the diversity of his influence)—not least for his critique of innatism—,[1342] but in detail he thinks like Condillac, considering the higher functions of the soul as successive refinements of "sentir".[1343] For the internal relationship between materialist epistemology and association theory, the fact speaks eloquently that the decisive preliminary work for the latter had already been done by Hobbes, who moreover, just like Condillac, assumed a connection between associative process and "desire" or biostructure.[1344]

The appropriation of the theory of association by materialists like La Mettrie, who thought from an ontology and not primarily epistemologically (as, for example, Condillac himself), and above all the original coupling of the rejection of Cartesian innatism with the repudiation of Cartesian dualism indicate that the (radically) empiricist approach in epistemology had certain substantive presuppositions. Despite the self-understanding of many of its older and newer representatives, epistemology has at no time been a purely formal-methodological discipline, shaped prior to any engagement with contents of knowledge in order then to point out the best access to them with a priori certainty, but it has always, at least objectively-structurally, appeared as an organic component of a particular ideological basic attitude, that is, it implies certain substantive predecisions. The (radical) epistemological empiricism in the Age of Enlightenment is fundamentally also an accompanying phenomenon of the general ontological elevation of matter in the struggle against Cartesian and theological dualism. However, the new conception of matter had not only epistemological but also moral-philosophical consequences—and precisely because of this multidimensionality, or this comprehensive claim, the intellectualist reaction against it could

1341 *op. cit.*, I, 2, Ch. III; *Traité des Sensations* I, Ch. I and VII = *Oeuvres* 17 B, 225 A, 239 B.

1342 *Abrégé des Systèmes* §V; *Homme Machine* = *Oeuvres* I, 210, 313.

1343 *Traité de l'âme* XIII §V = *Oeuvres* I, 151. Also for La Mettrie, reflection arises from the combination of sensation and attention (ibid., 149 f.).

1344 *Leviathan* III = *EW* III, 11 ff. (on the effect of desire, 13).

not fail to appear, which also had to assume several forms, among them an epistemological one. Intellectualist doctrines concerning the origin and nature of knowledge regularly appear in the closest connection with the defense of a scale of values that appears threatened by materialism or by (supposedly) far-reaching concessions to it; therefore, we will also refer to them in the context of the presentation of the moral-philosophical debate of the 18th century.[1345] However, these considerations should already at this point state the reason why (epistemological) intellectualism in the Age of Enlightenment must not simply be dismissed as a marginal phenomenon in comparison to Locke's authority, but—just like materialism—must be seen in its logical and intellectual-historical necessity.

With these reservations, we can now confidently say that the main current in the epistemology of the 18th century was empirically oriented, though not extreme, but rather in the sense of the dualism of oscillation, as prefigured by Locke's somewhat ambiguous explanation of the origin of knowledge from sensation and reflection. In view of the internal relation of epistemological empiricism to the general rehabilitation of sensibility, the question must now be posed regarding its ontological and anthropological or moral-philosophical correlates. The connection between the (epistemological) renunciation of "hypotheses" and the emergence of a new (ontological) idea of the whole was explained in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the same theme is to be continued on another level. After a brief reminder of some complementary aspects of the struggle against epistemological intellectualism (denigration of mathematics, etc.), we will describe how, from the new determination of the faculties decisive for knowledge, a concept of knowledge arises which at least tendentially encompasses the whole of human existence in its complexity, but also in its sensuous rootedness, so that it may be called an "existential concept of knowledge." Sense and reason, drive or will and reflection, are to be interwoven in it just as they are in human existence itself; but knowledge and existence themselves are also to be interwoven, so that the statements of the former must not constitute mere entia rationis, but must form the direct, living outflow of the latter. The rationality of statements in theoretical and especially in practical-moral respect thus

1345 Ch. VI, Sect. 3.

springs from the deeper rationality of human nature, which in turn—due not least to the insight into the sensuous-existential conditioning of knowledge—cannot at all be reduced to the intellect. From the perspective of the empiricist turn, ratio and intellect are far from identical, while on the other hand the principled interweaving of rationality and human nature binds the former to certain substantive statements about the latter. After the rehabilitation of sensibility, however, man is also regarded as nature, thus the substantive determination of his nature must be oriented toward the concept of nature as the last and highest (ontological) instance. Knowledge and man are rooted in nature and are rational insofar and as long as they are rooted in nature. The interweaving of the sensuous and the spiritual in knowledge and man likewise has its foundation in nature, especially since it corresponds to the new, to a greater or lesser extent monistically colored idea of the whole or directly emerges from it. In this complex of thought, epistemological, anthropological, moral-normative, and ontological aspects flow together. Formally speaking, this interweaving was by no means new. This time, however, it stood under the sign of the rehabilitation of sensibility or the elevation of matter—and this constituted the decisive substantive contrast to those positions from which it sought to distance itself.

2. The Continuation of the Struggle Against the "Hypotheses"

a) The Denigration of Mathematics

The logically conditioned connection between the (epistemological) denigration of mathematics and the (ontological) elevation of matter understandably appears most vividly among thinkers who deal with biological questions. For the "matière productive" (Buffon), which supported the edifice of the new biology, resisted most strongly that identification with extension upon which the thorough mathematization of all natural scientific disciplines was

supposed to rely. If matter, especially organic matter, is something more and something different than extension, it can scarcely be grasped by purely mathematical means. In view of the colorful abundance of empirically ascertainable qualities of the sensuous, mathematical quantities must appear as alien to reality, abstract, or fictitious. It is precisely this accusation that Buffon raises against mathematics—a science "de pure spéculation, de simple curiosité et d'entiére inutilité".[1346] Its truths, after all, are tautological, i.e., they arise as conclusions from already presupposed definitions or as repetitions of the same; the truth of each individual mathematical proposition is founded in that of the preceding one, so that ultimately only "des identités d'idées" without any content of reality would result.[1347] Mathematics can therefore only be applied to quite simple objects, namely "dénués des qualités physiques," but not to the more complicated biological phenomena,[1348] with which the Cartesian conception of matter can make little use. The same connection between the epistemological rejection of mathematical intellectualism and the ontological assumption of a matter rich in content also appears in Diderot. He too places at the center of his reflections those "molecules," which are originally and by themselves a "force active" and do not require any impulse from outside in order to move. The philosophical thesis that matter is in itself dead "ressemble peut-être à celle de géométres, qui admettent des points sans aucune dimension, des lignes, sans largeur ni profondeur etc." Mathematics thus kills all living concreteness in the object of knowledge; by classifying matter as inert or "indifférente," it simultaneously abstracts from "toutes les qualités qui lui sont essentielles." "Geometry and metaphysics" should therefore be left to others; Diderot wishes to preserve for himself the concreteness of the physicist's and chemist's view.[1349] Already in early texts he draws an ironic parallel between the "transcendence" of mathematics, which is actually a mental game, and speculative metaphysics, whose emptiness mathematicians themselves had

1346 *Hist. Natur.*, 1. Disc., *De la Manière etc.* = *Oeuvres* 24 B.
1347 *op. cit.*, 23 B–24 A.
1348 *op. cit.*, 25 B–26 A; cf. the condemnation of abstractions in general, *Hist. des Animaux*, Ch. II = *Oeuvres* 257 B–258 A; Buffon sets out his empiricist epistemology in *Hist. Nat. de l'homme, Des sens* = *Oeuvres* 309 B ff.
1349 *Princ. Phil. sur la Mat. et le Mouv.* = *OC* II, 65 f.

originally sought to overcome.[1350] Even if mathematical calculation helps to refute false hypotheses by measuring their deviation from empirical data, this still does not entail its own direct usefulness: for its respective result can be reached by several combinations, which differ completely in content from one another.[1351]

Through the hypothesis that mathematics might perhaps have been the adequate mode of knowledge for a pure spirit or God,[1352] Diderot, to demonstrate its inadequacy for human conditions, no longer referred to the object but to the subject of knowledge: logically so, since the ontological elevation of matter advocated by himself had its epistemological counterpart. If knowledge is rooted in the senses, then mathematical quantities—at least insofar as they claim intellectual purity and origin—must also appear as fictitious with regard to the knowing subject. Thus, in Hume, the conception of consciousness as the theater of particular and changing sense impressions is connected with a view of mathematical ideas as arbitrary fictions, which, just as in Diderot, recall the forms and substances of scholastic ontology.[1353] Indeed, Hume turns against the assumption that mathematical ideas are of "spiritual nature" with unambiguous words; like all our ideas, they too are "copy'd from our impressions",[1354] and therefore they must not claim absolute exactness—[1355]they can only be applied meaningfully if they renounce it.[1356] But if even mathematical ideas come from the senses, then they arise; they are not. It must be so, in a consciousness that itself becomes and is not. We already noted that (modern) evolutionism in biology and genetic consideration in epistemology logically-structurally belong together, since they both arise from the same rehabilitation of sensibility. Just as evolutionism becomes indispensable for deriving mind from matter—whose priority is presupposed—, so too genetic epistemology becomes necessary when one proceeds from the sensible origin of knowledge. For the

1350 *Lettre sur les aveugles* = *OC* I, 304; cf. *Interp. de la Nat.* II–III = *OC* II, 10.
1351 *Lettre* = *OC* I, 303.
1352 *loc. cit.*, 293 f.
1353 According to two apt expressions by Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* II, 252, 253 f.
1354 *Treatise* I, 3, 2 = p. 72.
1355 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
1356 *op. cit.*, I, 2, 4 = p. 45.

higher achievements of intelligence, from art to mathematics, are already there (i.e., even before the emergence of this epistemological conception) and demand an explanation, just as the organism or psychic life, already existing (before materialism), demands it. Only under empiricist presuppositions was therefore a consistent genetic approach in epistemology conceivable. It is thus no coincidence that Locke was the first to consciously and programmatically call his method "a historical, plain method".[1357] Maupertuis also speaks of the "histoire de notre esprit"[1358] and even in his presentation follows Condillac more than Locke;[1359] although he, somewhat in passing, names two faculties of knowledge, namely apercevoir and raisonner, he nevertheless understands abstract ideas as the conclusion of a development that must pass through perception, memory, and sign.[1360] Mathematical ideas form no exception, and Maupertuis even sees, similarly to Hume, the possibility of a fruitful application of them precisely grounded in their sensible origin and the repeatability (réplicabilité) of sensible data thereby ensured: precisely because mathematical ideas do not originate from the pure intellect, they can retain a certain proximity to practice.[1361] In this sense, Maupertuis welcomes the expansion of geometry into physics, while at the same time demanding the control of it through experience.[1362] He places such great importance on the primacy of experience that he sometimes speaks as if the use of "raisonnement" in physics served only a technical purpose, namely saving time and effort.[1363] As expected, the biologist Maupertuis asserts not only the empiricist mode of knowledge of the subject but also the nature of the object against mathematical intellectualism. Thus, he denies the applicability of mathematics to a "physique plus particulière" such as medicine,[1364] which deals with living matter. The "philosophie expérimentale" investigates bodies as they are, whereas mathematics disregards the

1357 *Essay*, Introd. = I, 27.
1358 *Réflexions philosophiques sur l'origine des langues*, § III = *Oeuvres* I, 261.
1359 Brunet, *Maupertuis*, 406 f.
1360 *Réflexions philosophiques* §§ VII ff. = *Oeuvres* I, 264 ff.
1361 Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem* II, 335.
1362 *Discours sur les devoirs de l'Académie* = *Oeuvres* III, 291 ff.
1363 *loc. cit.*, 289.
1364 *Lettre* XV = *Oeuvres* II, 318 f.

greater part of their concrete properties.[1365]

To the extent that the mathematically-intellectualist approach set itself the goal of a total knowledge, its rejection had to culminate in a skeptical-phenomenalist attitude. For Maupertuis, the cause of our "perceptions" or the thing in itself is unknowable, and the limits of our cognitive faculty are insurmountable, although we must assume that our perceptions indeed have an objective cause outside ourselves.[1366] This phenomenalism could be used for anti-metaphysical—anti-Cartesian and anti-theological—purposes, and thus it was also not unpopular among materialists such as La Mettrie.[1367] We know how d'Alembert deployed it against the "hypotheses".[1368] For him, as for Maupertuis, both the unknowability and the existence of the thing in itself are certain.[1369] D'Alembert does not show himself willing in all respects to distance himself from Locke in favor of Condillac, especially since the intellectualist component, particularly in his earlier thought, was more pronounced than, for instance, in Maupertuis;[1370] nevertheless, he considerably relativizes the autonomy of reflection or of the inner sense.[1371] Thus, his assessment of mathematics is also prefigured. Mathematics arises in the process "des opérations et des abstractions successives de notre esprit",[1372] although after its formation it can proceed deductively; even then, however, the definitions from which it proceeds by no means contain the essence of the defined.[1373] Mathematical knowledge is, in other words, tautological insofar as its principles contain only what we have put into them—[1374]and that in the best case: for not infrequently axioms

1365 *Discours sur les devoirs* = *Oeuvres* III, 293.

1366 *Réflexions philosophiques sur l'origine des langues* § XXVIII = *Oeuvres* I, 283; cf. *Lettre* IV = *Oeuvres* II, 233 f.

1367 *Traité de l'âme*, X § IV = *Oeuvres* I, 87 f.

1368 See Ch. IV, Sect. 2 b.

1369 *Éléments de philosophie*, VI = *Oeuvres* II, 135 f.

1370 *Essay, Language Theory, Epistemology and Aesthetics of d'Alembert*, 65 ff.

1371 Kunz, *Erkenntnistheorie d'Alemberts*, 102 f.; Grimsley, *D'Alembert* 228. Grimsley subsequently describes very vividly the difficulties of d'Alembert in trying to bridge the gap between sensation and idea.

1372 *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 198.

1373 *Éléments de philosophie*, IV = *Oeuvres* II, 33, 36; the nominalist approach of d'Alembert also includes his critique of language, ibid. 57 ff., 249 ff.

1374 *op. cit.*, XIV = *Oeuvres* II, 291.

and definitions are either empty or ambiguous,[1375] which also makes possible the misuse of mathematical procedures for metaphysical-speculative purposes.[1376] Mathematical theorems are thus fictions, "n'ont pas rigoureusement lieu dans la nature," and yet they can offer solutions to concrete problems, whose correctness proves itself in practice. This is d'Alembert's modest answer to the skeptics on the one hand, who would like to deny mathematics any real object altogether, and to the "physiciens ignorants en mathématique" on the other hand.[1377] At the same time, the exaggerations of mathematical procedures in physics are sharply condemned, and it is emphasized, with regard to the newer sciences, that not all levels of reality are equally capable of mathematical grasp.[1378] At this point, d'Alembert draws the distinction between general experimental physics and physico-mathematical sciences: mathematical calculation should be applied only to the latter. Thus, once again, the (ontological) criterion of the constitution of the object of knowledge is introduced. With d'Alembert, this aspect is not as weighty as with the biologists, but in view of the internal logic of the thought structures we are studying here, a brief reference to d'Alembert's later flirtation with monistic-materialistic theses should nevertheless not be entirely without interest.[1379]

The extent of the denigration of mathematics as a result of the fundamental epistemological-ontological rejection of intellectualism is most tellingly indicated by the fact that even Newton was caught up in it,[1380] although he had at first been praised from all sides as the apostle of inductive-empirical scientificity. Already the distinction, which had become customary, between the *Principia* and the *Optics* as representatives of two at least divergent methodological

1375 *op. cit.*, IV, XIV = *Oeuvres* II, 29 f., 331 f., 358 f.
1376 *op. cit.*, V = *Oeuvres* II, 75.
1377 *op. cit.*, XV = *Oeuvres* II, 305 ff.
1378 *op. cit.*, XX = *Oeuvres* II, 466 ff.; *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 207 f., 203 f.
1379 See especially the letter to Frederick of 30.11.1770 = *Oeuvres* XVII, 210 f., 213: interweaving of intelligence and matter in man and the universe, i.e., materiality of God.
1380 Guerlac, *Newton's Changing Reputation*, in: *Essays*, 76 f.

conceptions[1381] expressed a certain mistrust of the mathematician Newton. With the increasingly stronger anti-intellectualist current, not everyone was satisfied anymore with Newton's opposition to the Cartesian understanding of mathematics—a contrast that was inevitable, given the application of mathematics to a fundamentally differently conceived physics—[1382]or with his remarks on the necessity of using mathematical procedure depending on the nature of the particular object of knowledge, as well as on the impossibility of translating all problems into mathematical language.[1383] Within the loose framework of "Newtonianism," very different conceptions of mathematics were conceivable, and this was the reason both for the continued suspicion that Newton had not shed all the fetters of intellectualism, and for the efforts of empirically minded Newtonians to make up for what the master had neglected according to the needs of the spirit of the time. This suspicion could be nourished not only by laudatory words from Neocartesians like Fontenelle about the foundation of Newtonian physics through "la plus profonde géométrie"[1384] but also by Newtonians like Keill, who advocated a mathematical realism.[1385] The (extreme) opponents of this extreme position did not merely emphasize the empirical character of physical knowledge (thus, for example, Maclaurin), while at the same time putting forward skeptical arguments against the validity claim of mathematics altogether, but even went so far as to regard Newton's use of mathematics as a matter of chance or tactic (thus, for example, Gordon).[1386] But even the mediating positions within the Newtonian school are characteristic of the ongoing denigration of mathematics. Thus, s'Gravesande, broadly anticipating corresponding positions of Maupertuis and d'Alembert, distinguishes between pure and mixed mathematics and declares that only the latter can serve physics.[1387] —

To complete our picture, it is necessary to recall those cases where, for purely polemical reasons, people found themselves ready to defend

1381 See Ch. IV, Sect. 2 b.
1382 Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, 10.
1383 Burtt, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 206, 210.
1384 *Éloge de Newton* = *Textauswahl*, 240.
1385 Strong, *Newtonian Explications*, 55 ff.
1386 *loc. cit.*, 70, 74 f., 81 f.
1387 *loc. cit.*, 67 f., 72.

mathematics as an act of an autonomous intellect. One example: Voltaire praises Newtonian empiricism in contrast to abstract scholastic syllogistics and regards experience as "vrai maître de philosophie".[1388] But already in the same section he reminds that scholasticism means not only syllogistics but also authority, and he reproaches those "qui combattent la raison par l'autorité" by misusing Holy Scripture. Against authority, however, it is not empiricism that must rise (that would make no sense), but precisely reason. This is why Voltaire, when he presents Newton as a thinker against all authority, points not only to the empiricist but also to the mathematician: Newton "vous dira: Ne m'en croyez pas; n'en croyez que vos yeux et les mathématiques".[1389] Such statements concerning mathematics are rather rare, but they must be recorded, for in them is already drawn that shift of standpoint depending on the respective polemical goal, which becomes very clear in the question of the rejection or use of "systems."

s'Gravesande's distinction between pure and mixed mathematics originates from Bacon,[1390] and this indirectly shows his rising esteem as a result of the spread of epistemological anti-intellectualism. It is easy to understand why Bacon, who did not like the "daintiness and pride of mathematicians" but assigned to their discipline and to logic only the dignity of "handmaids of Physic," and who also threw mathematics and speculative metaphysics into the same pot,[1391] could influence the conception of mathematics held by Diderot, for example.[1392] Literary influences, however, were only possible because the fundamental options were already fixed. Their origin in the ontological elevation of matter is already evident in the intertwining of the controversy over the nature of force with that over

1388 *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*, II, 2 = *OC* XXII, 449.
1389 *op. cit.*, II, 10 = *OC* XXII, 485.
1390 Translation of *De Augmentis* III, 6 = *Works* IV, 370.
1391 *ibid.*, 369 f.
1392 Diedanann, *Influence of Bacon*, in: *Studien*, 37 f.

the status of mathematics.[1393] In Leibniz, as a theorist of force and a mathematician, this intertwining appears, understandably, in particularly sharp light. His introduction of dynamics into physics entails the new universal method of combinatorics in mathematics, which itself must be based on a collaboration of imagination or intuition and discursive thinking, such as could not occur with Descartes.[1394] In his polemic against Bayle,[1395] Leibniz, among other things, defended mathematics; he admitted that in nature there are no "changements parfaitement uniformes" such as mathematicians would like to imagine, but at the same time pointed to the indispensability of mathematical rules for the grasp of reality: even if they are fictitious, they nevertheless correspond to reality, which, because of its rational structure, can only behave according to fixed rules.[1396] This rationality, however, is metaphysically grounded, namely in the sense of a dynamic metaphysics under whose aegis dynamic physics stands. The new determination of the relations between mathematics and physics or metaphysics in the framework of the general dynamic approach—as compared to Descartes—now allows Leibniz both an elevation and dynamization of mathematics, but at the same time a denigration of it, since its dynamization is carried out under the sign and according to the needs of the metaphysical concept. Leibniz regarded the claim of mathematics to do without metaphysics as a sign of dangerous philosophical blindness, not of autonomy. Even people like Hobbes would make use of mathematics; thus, materialism and atheism are not to be refuted through it, but through metaphysical truths to which the mathematical must be subordinated.[1397] This corrective instruction of mathematics from the standpoint of metaphysics, however, logically pointed in the opposite direction to the usual Enlightenment rejection of mathematics by appeal to physics or empiricism. Nevertheless, the

1393 This compression was well described by Belaval, *La Crise de la Géométrisation*, especially 345 ff.; it is however a strong argument against Belaval's thesis (349 f.) that the autonomy of the Cartesian machine prepared the way for materialist monism. Psychologically this may sometimes have been so, but logically-structurally the claim is false. See above, Ch. IV, Sect. 4 b.

1394 Vuillemin, *Différence et identité*, 271 f., 298, 301.

1395 About his view of mathematics in connection with the revaluation of sociological sensuality see Ch. VI, Sect. 4 b.

1396 *Réponse aux réflexions etc.* = *Philosophische Schriften* IV, 568 f.

1397 *Zweites Schreiben an Clarke* = *Philosophische Schriften* VII, 355.

impression that Leibniz took up an anti-mathematical position was not absent, and it intensified especially after the rediscovery of the dynamic, anti-Cartesian side of Leibniz's thought.

b) Ambiguities in the Rejection of Systems and the Polemical Meaning of the Appeal to Empiricism

The denigration of mathematical intellectualism as a result of the radicalizing rehabilitation of sensibility was accompanied by a general rejection of the "systematic spirit." By "system" in the negative sense was understood that which forces empirical reality into an arbitrary formal framework or simply overlooks it, so as not to endanger already established views and aims by taking account of empiricism. Systems are built on uncertain facts, writes Buffon, and serve the inclination to bring various things under a single denominator or to level concrete multiplicity—[1398]against which he recommends the collection of ascertained facts and the avoidance of "de tout esprit de système".[1399] But Buffon also touches on the anthropological and ideological aspect of the problem. Systems are "êtres moraux créés par des vues purement humaines," they are based on "convenances morales," and in them or through them occurs a merging or rather a confusion of empiricism and knowledge with feelings, passions, and desires.[1400] This is written in the context of the rejection of *causae finales*, and thus the anti-theological thrust is obvious. Condillac had already a few years earlier pointed to the same factors to explain the genesis of (metaphysical) systems. Not logical thinking but "passions" and temperaments underlie them; precisely because they are "jouets de caprice," they arise and vanish so quickly.[1401] In sociological terms, Condillac emphasizes the alliance between (metaphysical) systems and religious prejudices, which is promoted by despots,[1402] as well as the formation of schools around a self-important philosopher, whose authority silences criticism and thereby ensures the continuation of his

1398 *Hist. Natur.*, 1. Disc., *De la Manière etc.* = *Oeuvres*, 9 A.
1399 Already in one of his earliest publications, see the preface to the translation (1735) of Hales' *Vegetable Statics*, in: *Oeuvres* 5 B.
1400 *Hist. des Animaux*, V = *Oeuvres* 258 AB.
1401 *Traité des Systèmes*, Ch. II = *Oeuvres* I, 126 B–127 A.
1402 *op. cit.*, Ch. V = *Oeuvres* I, 140 B.

system.[1403] Condillac also notes that philosophers make their own authority unassailable by speaking about things that cannot be empirically verified,[1404] and at this point his logical critique sets in. The strategy of the system constructors, according to Condillac, is simple: they set up general principles in order to deduce from them "des vérités moins générales." Nevertheless, these principles are either so general that their possible truth becomes irrelevant, or they are applied to cases for which their partial truth does not fit, or finally, their vagueness is intended to throw completely different things together into one pot. In fact, however, their generality is fictitious, because it always arises from the generalization of a particular aspect, and this is the reason why, with regard to a multidimensional problem, several systems are produced simultaneously.[1405] For the same reason, the basic concepts of metaphysical systems, such as being, substance, etc., can also be interpreted arbitrarily, so that the dispute over their content degenerates into a battle of words: "la vérité dépend des caprices de notre langage".[1406] In this, Condillac had said the essential in all questions of system critique, and his remarks indeed became authoritative, at least in the sense of a deepened summary of widespread views. Maupertuis also refers approvingly to him in his rejection of systems, whose particular interest already results from the author's close contact with the scientific practice of his time. Systems like that of Leibniz, for example, are "de vrais malheurs pour les progrès des sciences," because they are founded on "êtres invisibles," which cannot be confirmed or refuted by any experience. Whoever constructs a system does not think of the thing itself or of nature, but only of his own work, that is, he confuses products of thought with reality.[1407] The thing itself moves increasingly into the distance the more philosophers become entangled in disputes—that is, in the net of their own fictions.[1408] In the sense of his phenomenalism, Maupertuis finally points to the objective unknowability of the thing in itself in order to explain the subjective inclination toward systems. One does

1403 *op. cit.*, Ch. I = *Oeuvres* I, 122 A.
1404 *op. cit.*, Ch. IV = *Oeuvres* I, 131 A.
1405 This complex of ideas in *op. cit.*, Ch. II = *Oeuvres* I, 125 A–126 B.
1406 *op. cit.*, Ch. III = *Oeuvres* I, 129 B–130 A.
1407 *Lettre* VII = *Oeuvres* II, 257 ff. (reference to Condillac on p. 260).
1408 *Lettre* VIII = *Oeuvres* II, 263 f.

not want to resign oneself to the fact that our mind can have no other objects than those discovered by the senses, and precisely beyond this insurmountable barrier the self-satisfied flights of systems find their free space.[1409]

These typical statements contain all the fundamental motifs of the critique of "systems," and therefore it is unnecessary to follow the countless variations of the same theme among very many authors of the 18th century. What this critique offered was without doubt a largely accurate description, and above all Condillac anticipated decisive arguments of modern positivist critique of metaphysics. But it did not remain with description and critique. For the bad system was opposed by the good one, which was supposed to mirror the order of things without arbitrariness and prejudice. Why one cannot dispense altogether with the system, or with the idea of the whole, we have previously tried to explain on the occasion of the first great confrontation of modern rationalism with theological ontology: only on the basis of a comprehensive refutation of a (comprehensive) opposing position is there, in the ideological struggle, a prospect of long-term success. One does not appear convincing in polemics if one cannot answer fundamental questions, although one must at the same time reserve for oneself the monopoly of deciding which the (relevant) fundamental questions are. This means that the position of the Enlighteners, in order to fulfill its polemical function, was by no means obliged to answer those questions which, from the opponent's point of view, should be regarded as the first and last. On the other hand, however, disputes over God, the soul, etc. etc., could only be set aside without penalty if one were able to erect an alternative totality of knowledge that, by its very existence and structure, would render the opponent's ultimate questions irrelevant or meaningless. One could even appear as an agnostic—but only with regard to the opponent's ultimate questions. However, the reasons why one wishes to be an agnostic in this particular respect are themselves drawn from a coherent chain of thought, which in itself contains an answer to the ultimate questions now considered relevant. The new totality of knowledge is—in only seemingly paradoxical fashion—the reverse side, indeed the precondition, of that agnosticism which one (whether sincerely or hypocritically) displays with regard to the opponent's

1409 *Vénus physique* VIII = *Oeuvres* II, 45 f.

ultimate questions. If, by the way, what is considered relevant within the new position were likewise unknowable, then the propagation of a specific scientific ideal in contrast to the "abstract systems" would make no sense at all. In short: in order to answer ultimate questions polemically convincingly, one does not need to answer the opponent's ultimate questions. In the struggle over the displacement of the relevant levels, the polemical sense of the debate about systems becomes clear. Behind the epistemological objection stands the substantive-ontological one. The role of empiricism in the establishment of the good system is emphasized only because sensibility has already been elevated in advance, or is now no longer seen Cartesianly, in opposition to spirit, but in its interweaving with it. As said before, empiricism or sensualism is no more the "natural" or presuppositionless epistemological position than is intellectualism. The radical rehabilitation of sensibility produced a different conception of the constitution of being than that which corresponded to the rehabilitation of sensibility in the sense of the mathematical world models of the 17th century, and this far-reaching shift also manifested itself in epistemology. Thus, only empiricist-procedural knowledge was capable of demonstrating the correctness of the new substantive-ontological position, because it itself stemmed from the latter. The (unconscious) belonging-together of epistemology and ontology sustains the (conscious) attempt to construct the latter on the basis of the former. But since the epistemological method itself resulted from certain substantive predecisions, it must produce the same in the form of results if one proceeds from it, i.e., "proceeds methodologically." This tautological circle did not look very different in the old metaphysical constructs. But at that time, being served as the starting point, whereas now knowledge or method is supposed to stand at the beginning. In this, however, is reflected not a progress in impartiality, but only that displacement of the levels regarded as relevant, of which we have just spoken.

The accusers of systems therefore do not reject every system or every coherent overall position, but only a very specific one. They themselves establish systems and gladly make use of this word when it serves to rationalize their own overall position. We now understand why, whenever the system in the good sense appears, direct or indirect reference is made to the substantive-ontological background of that

overall position. This is expressed in various forms, which can be illustrated by a few examples. The same Shaftesbury who wrote his famous sentence "The most ingenious way of becoming foolish, is by a System"[1410] immediately after an emphatic remark on the inadequacies of mathematics and thus unmistakably outlined his conception of the bad system, boasts elsewhere that his moral philosophy possesses the evidence of a "Moral Arithmetick".[1411] He could only claim this because this morality necessarily arose from an ontological conception which, although not formulated in an outwardly systematic form, was nevertheless expressed with inner coherence and as such was able to offer the basis for a coherent overall view.[1412] Systematicity in this sense arose from the desire to answer ultimate questions. If even someone to whom philosophy as a métier was as foreign as Shaftesbury could not resist the temptation to place the power or polemical force of systematicity at the service of his own position, then the "good system" had to be all the more embraced by others. Voltaire, who saw in every system an insult to his reason,[1413] who praised the absence of a system in Newton[1414] and reproached Descartes for "cet esprit systématique qui aveugle les plus grands hommes," says at the same time of Locke that there is no "esprit plus sage, plus méthodique, un logicien plus exact" than he, who thus proved "qu'on pouvait avoir l'esprit géomètre sans le secours de la géométrie." When Voltaire in the same context at length defends Locke's thesis of the possibility of thinking matter, he means by this that the good systematic spirit must also have other substantive goals in view than the bad one. The praise for Locke that he proceeds "comme un excellent anatomiste" is therefore to be understood not only epistemologically but also ontologically.[1415]

Even more instructive, however, are the examples of the

1410 *Characteristics*, I, 290.

1411 *op. cit*., II, 173. An awkward attempt to fulfill Shaftesbury's promise or to introduce "a Mathematical Calculation in Subjects of Morality" was made by Hutcheson, *Inquiry into the Original etc.*, Treat. II, Sect. 3, XI = p. 168 ff.

1412 See Ch. VI, Sect. 3 b.

1413 *Dialogue de Pégase et du Vieillard* = *OC* X, 205; cf. the satirical poem "Les Systèmes" in the same volume 167 ff.

1414 Letter to L. C. of 23.12.1768 = *OC* XLVI, 202 f.

1415 *Lettres philosophiques* XIII = *OC* XXII, 122 ff.

founders or main representatives of Enlightenment positivism itself. Maupertuis' critique of systems, as is well known, did not prevent him from writing a "Système de la Nature," from which it becomes quite evident what such an undertaking was based on, namely on the conviction of the order and lawfulness of nature.[1416] That (good) system and (lawfully structured) nature—thus epistemological and ontological—are closely connected, indeed two sides of the same coin, is explicitly stated by Condillac, who nevertheless, just like Maupertuis or d'Alembert, wanted to be a strict phenomenalist. The (good) system, according to his view, constitutes a closed whole grounded in a single principle—and the universe in turn is only a system, because the phenomena occurring within it relate to one another as cause and effect and are subjected to a supreme law.[1417] Admittedly, we will presumably never succeed in reconstructing the world system without gaps—precisely because the interdependence of all phenomena does not allow for total explanations as long as even a few of them remain unknown or unexplained.[1418] The mentioned interdependence or the lawful order of nature is therefore presupposed and considered both the cause of our ignorance and the orientational framework of our knowledge. A similar train of thought appears in d'Alembert, for whom, moreover, Condillac is "un de nos meilleurs philosophes" and the definitive conqueror of abstract systematics.[1419] D'Alembert himself distinguishes between the sound "esprit systématique" and the pedantic "esprit de système".[1420] Given the healthy orientation of systematic endeavor, d'Alembert is willing to align himself with the idea of system to the extent that he elevates the very possibility of establishing a scientific whole into a criterion of truth. Our knowledge, he says, is deficient, on the one hand because we know too few truths, and on the other because of the "défaut d'enchaînement entre les vérités connues".[1421] The systematic interlinking is thus *eo ipso* a necessary component of complete knowledge. For the ontological

1416 *Système de la Nature* XXVII = *Oeuvres* II, 154 f.
1417 *Dictionnaire des synonymes* = *Oeuvres* III, 511 B–512 A. Cf. the analysis by Knight, *Géométrie de l'esprit*, 56 ff., cf. 128.
1418 *Traité des Systèmes*, Ch. XII = *Oeuvres* I, 197 B.
1419 *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 288.
1420 *loc. cit.*, 202.
1421 *Éléments de philosophie* IV § I = *Oeuvres* II, 41.

tendency of the time that stands behind the epistemological reflections, it is highly significant that it is precisely from the lips of the nominalist d'Alembert—who holds the knowledge of the ground of the world to be impossible—that the words come that the possibility of the systematic whole to some extent rests ultimately on the real existing unity of being: "Tous les êtres, et par conséquent tous les objets de nos connaissances, ont entr'eux une liaison qui nous échappe".[1422]

It would be mistaken to trace d'Alembert's systematic striving back to a secretly operative Cartesian component of his thought, although the idea of the systematic whole came into honor not least through Descartes, something that, despite the radical opposition to the content and construction method of the Cartesian whole, could not simply be forgotten. Nevertheless, the real reasons for the insistence on the systematic construction of a whole despite the rejection of systems must be sought elsewhere, as we have just outlined. Diderot, to be sure, stands even further from the Cartesian ideal of knowledge than d'Alembert, and yet he just as emphatically makes the possibility of an epistemologically convincing procedure dependent on the ontological assumption of a lawfully functioning totality of nature: "Si les phénomènes ne sont pas enchaînés les uns aux autres, il n'y point de philosophie... Toute notre science naturelle devient aussi transitoire que les mots".[1423] Precisely because, from this perspective, epistemology and ontology are supposed to coincide, the firmness of the system also does not rest on the power of the intellect but on the structure of being. Its apprehension therefore need not occur through abstractions, which, although, as Condillac says, are "absolument nécessaires," are necessary only "pour mettre de l'ordre dans nos connaissances"; otherwise, nature itself guides the steps of empirically proceeding knowledge.[1424] Systematic thinking and intellectualism therefore have nothing to do with each other—and this because of the recourse to a particular conception of the constitution of being, which ultimately is supposed to be identical with the inner constitution of knowledge itself. Thanks to this way of thinking, even the most vehement opponents of intellectualism could deploy the polemically useful idea of system at the right moment. Thus Rousseau writes in the

1422 *op. cit.*, IV = *Oeuvres* II, 28.
1423 *Interpétation de la Nature* LVIII = *OC* II, 57.
1424 *Traité des Systèmes*, Ch. I = *Oeuvres* I, 122 A.

preface to the *Émile* that the "partie systématique" of novels is nothing other than "la marche de la nature".[1425] The system is therefore the thing itself, and in view of this identity, it must not—and indeed cannot—be constructed by intellectualistic means if, in the thing itself, intellect is subordinate. In this way arises an identity of system and thing, aiming to support an anti-intellectualistic position with ultimate arguments. But not only in narrowly philosophical polemics, also in socio-political polemics, the Enlighteners could not do without the system or the idea of the whole if they did not want to leave the field to their opponents. Typical in this respect are Turgot's statements, which show a good sense for the polemical-substantive meaning of the debate about good and bad system. Turgot, to be sure, rejects systems that rest on arbitrary assumptions, but at the same time he points out the dangerous consequences that the discrediting of the idea of system altogether has among the "laity." Many condemned as a system, suppressing the diversity of nature, every well-founded proposal for the reform of existing abuses; the word "homme à systèmes" had become "une espèce d'arme," and indeed in the service of the privileged or the conservatives rather than the reverse. Turgot insists on the good system, which is indispensable to every thinking human being, but regrets the mixing of the two senses of the word, which, depending on need, serves different purposes.[1426]

Under these circumstances, it becomes easily understandable why Diderot's terse statement "sans l'idée de tout, plus de philosophie"[1427] could count on general agreement. One had to hold fast to the idea of the whole in order to present one's own knowledge as justified and irrefutable. Yet the whole could only be speculatively apprehended and interpreted (especially as its interpretation often aimed to justify certain values), and this stood objectively in contradiction to the declared wish of the Enlighteners to proceed strictly empirically and to reject all "arbitrary" hypotheses. The manner in which the Enlighteners typically resolved this contradiction —or rather behaved as if it did not exist at all—can only be explained if one understands the appeal to empiricism in its polemical sense. It is a weapon against "scholastic syllogistics" on the one hand and against

1425 *Oeuvres*, IV, 242.
1426 *Éloge de Gournay* = *Oeuvres* I, 618 ff.
1427 *Interpétation de la Nature* = *OC* II, 15.

mathematical intellectualism on the other, which stood in the way of the radical rehabilitation of sensibility, no matter how much it too polemicized against traditional theological metaphysics. From this, the reverse conclusion was also drawn: views that content-wise opposed the aforementioned two positions were regarded *eo ipso* and *a priori* as compatible with empiricism or as declarations of allegiance to empiricism, and welcomed as such, quite regardless of whether they had actually emerged from an empirical procedure. The commitment to empiricism is essentially a highly symbolic act, a sign of belonging to a particular ideological party. By this I by no means intend to dispute the importance of this commitment for the development of the sciences or the honesty of the efforts of many researchers to study the empirical world empirically—on the contrary. This honesty, however, drew its strength from a fundamental attitude that itself could not be empirically given. Moreover, if taken seriously, the empirical-inductive method can by no means explain the form and content of the scientific literature of the 18th century. The stage is not dominated by monographs on an empirically limited and fully interpretable problem, but by ambitious and voluminous "Systèmes de la Nature," authored not only by mediocre compilers but also by the most important representatives of the new natural science.[1428] The treatment of particular questions almost always takes place within the framework of general reflections on the essence and constitution of nature, which are served up with the greatest self-evidence alongside the praise of the empirical method and the rejection of unbridled speculation. La Mettrie sums up the prevailing attitude when he mocks those who lose themselves in details, then adds the highly significant words: "pour moi qui ne suis curieux que de la philosophie... la nature active sera toujours mon seul point de vue. J'aime à la voir au loin, en grand, comme en général, et non en particulier ou en petits détails, qui quoique nécessaires jusqu'à un certain point dans toutes les sciences,

1428 See Mornet's remarks, *Diderot*, 34 f. Mornet points out the same contradiction in Diderot himself: on the one hand, he appears as a "prêtre austère de l'observation et de l'expérience," but on the other hand, "il n'est séduit, transporté, enivré que par les grandes vues, par les rhapsodies lyriques et prophétiques" (49). Mayer also notes the same contradiction between declarations and practice for 18th-century natural science (see *Illusions de la philosophie expérimentale*, especially 356 ff.).

communément sont la marque de peu de génie de ceux qui s'y livrent".[1429] It is thus no wonder that La Mettrie's transformism and evolutionism were not the result of empirical observations, but rather the logical conclusion drawn from the combination of the two assumptions of productive matter and the chain of beings;[1430] in fact, many of those who gave new impulses to the new biology were natural philosophers without specialized training, who often drew the ire of the "empiricists" of the laboratory.[1431] The epistemological concept underlying the project of the *Encyclopédie* also transcended the bounds of the empirically secured, that is, it was founded in a metaphysically colored postulate of total knowledge, so that even the Baconian empiricism regarded as exemplary was reinterpreted in the light of the speculative ideal of totality.[1432]

Given this situation, it becomes easy to understand why the contradiction between the condemnation of systems and their actual use for one's own purposes sometimes became so glaring that protest could not be absent, as the controversy over Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* shows.[1433] For the various "metaphysicians" and "systematizers," it was, over time, a provocation to be denounced precisely for these sins by apriorists and deductionists. Indeed, the attitude of the Enlighteners, when they invoke general instances like nature to interpret individual phenomena, is, in its polemical consistency, logically highly paradoxical. In reality, one proceeds deductively, only that the principles of deduction are defined as empirically given, whereupon the whole procedure is, with an easy conscience, called inductive.[1434] It is rather a matter of the decision to appeal to

1429 *Homme Plante* III = *Oeuvres* II, 19.

1430 Vartanian, *Trembley's Polyp*, 274.

1431 Roger, *Sciences de la Vie*, 458.

1432 Dieckmann, *Concept of Knowledge in the Encyclopédie*, in: *Studien*, 247 f., 249, 253 f.
(Though Dieckmann cannot be followed when he attributes the idea of total knowledge of the Encyclopedists largely to Cartesian influence (254); the primary cause remains the polemical necessity for a conception of the Whole.)

1433 Details in Mornet, *Sciences de la nature*, 108 ff., especially 121 ff.

1434 Metzger, *Newton-Stahl-Boerhaave*, 89, describes how the Cartesian "speculations" were combated by representatives of Newtonian chemistry in the name of empiricism, though largely using "conceptions a priori" that themselves were questioned through a new, more radical appeal to experience.

empiricism as the highest instance whenever a highest instance of justification is needed, rather than patiently lingering with it, if necessary at the cost of renouncing the idea of the whole. We are dealing here with a speculative empiricism—[1435]or with a speculative use of empiricism—which rests on the ideological decision to elevate sensibility. The speculative element is often clearly included into empiricism itself via a detour. By expanding the concept of empiricism, its boundaries are rendered fluid and its capacity of comprehension extended at will, although the magical-symbolic shield "empiricism" outwardly remains the same. Thus, empiricism does not merely mean the observation and description of phenomena, but already their "meaningful" combination and interpretation; it is a whole that encompasses both the phenomena themselves and the subjective activity of the researcher—that is, also his fundamental attitude. Thus, d'Alembert distinguishes between "observation" and "expérience": the former corresponds to "physique vulgaire," the latter to "physique expérimentale," which puts the real questions to nature.[1436] This flexible attitude appears even more emphatically in Diderot. For him, "expérience" is that instance which stands above "observation" and at the same time above "réflexion"; while the former collects the facts and

— Here it is worth recalling Buckle's largely forgotten comments about deduction and induction (*History of Civilization*, 793). Buckle notes that the prevailing use of deduction or induction determines the whole intellectual character of an epoch. Though he thought deduction prevailed in Scotland and Germany compared to England and France, he makes very subtle observations on the problem generally. He says deduction is a continuation of theological thought now dressed in metaphysical clothes (op. cit., 797, 799). Metaphysics without overt theology are constructions like "human nature," etc., and from this perspective, he sharply critiques Hutcheson's work. Also notable is his analysis of Reid's polemic against Hume, where he points out that Reid ultimately confuses the problem of morality with the problem of truth and attacks Hume's skepticism for its practical consequences, accusing Hume of using a deductive method — while defending his own position also deductively (op. cit., 832, 834). No further comment is needed. This same dynamic appears in Enlightenment polemics against the old theology. The Enlightenment's deduction usually rests on the concept of nature (see Ch. 4, Sect. 4).

1435 Cohen rightly speaks of a "speculative experimental science," *Newton and Franklin*, 15.

1436 *Éléments de philosophie* XX = *Oeuvres* II, 450 ff.

the latter combines them, empiricism verifies the results of the work of reflection.[1437] If the "véritable manière de philosopher" encompasses the entire scale from mental operations and the senses to the practical application of knowledge of nature,[1438] then the (deductive) "philosophie rationnelle" can simply be forgotten, without having to fear remaining permanently in the chaos of particulars, even if the progress of the (inductive) "philosophie expérimentale" is slow.[1439] Diderot then makes clear that with this expansion of the concept of empiricism—and despite the rejection of *philosophie rationnelle*—even large-scale generalizations (which he calls "conjectures") do not contradict the spirit of induction. By employing them in the draft of that whole which, in his conviction, alone enables natural philosophy, he can simultaneously denounce other means toward this goal, such as the analogical procedure, as misleading.[1440] Nevertheless, the procedure *per analogiam*, already early promoted by s'Gravesande[1441] and taken up by many, among them La Mettrie,[1442] had to become popular. For as Locke[1443] and following him Hume[1444] said, analogy, as a kind of "probability," precisely serves to transcend the limits of experience—that is, to lead toward the idea of the whole. Because one began from experience, one believed *eo ipso* that one remained faithful to experience to the end. However, this impression could arise only because experience had at least implicitly gained a substantive meaning, standing for a particular conception of the world and of nature. And when even opponents of the radical rehabilitation of sensibility themselves appealed to experience, it was not only because they wanted to minimize the distance between adversaries, but also because this conception had meanwhile become strong enough to dictate the language of the controversy.

1437 *Interpétation de la Nature* XV = *OC* II, 18.
1438 *op. cit.*, XVIII = *OC* II, 19.
1439 *op. cit.*, XX–XXVIII = *OC* II, 19 ff.
1440 *op. cit.*, LIII = *OC* II, 50; cf. *Entretien* = *OC* II, 119.
1441 Brunet, *Les physiciens hollandais*, 58.
1442 *Homme Plante* I = *Oeuvres* II, 2.
1443 *Essay*, IV, 16 § 12 = II, 379 ff. (Locke expressly recognizes the usefulness of analogical reasoning in natural science.)
1444 *Treatise* I, 3, 12; I, 4, 2 = pp. 142, 209. (Hume himself uses analogical reasoning; see the *Appendix* of the *Treatise*, p. 624.)

Buffon is thinking of the necessity of an expansion of the concept of experience with a view to an ideologically and scientifically effective idea of the whole when he demands from the naturalist, alongside the "petites attentions d'un instinct laborieux," also "les grandes vues d'un génie ardent qui embrasse tout d'un coup d'œil".[1445] The speculative-intuitive component of empiricism is here directly addressed and, not by chance, linked with the concept of genius. For already at the threshold of the Enlightenment, and indeed under the influence of the immense rise of the natural sciences and the accompanying formation of an independent layer of natural scientists concerned with their self-presentation, the natural scientist came to be regarded—especially within circles such as the Royal Society itself—as the new epochal figure, as the heroic benefactor of humanity. The concept of genius, which during the Renaissance had arisen in connection with the person of the man of letters and the artist, not that of the discoverer or inventor,[1446] was now primarily applied to the natural scientist, in whose ingenious mode of thought even men of letters and literary critics wanted to see a model for the artist.[1447] Imagination, above all, was now supposed to be a mark of the natural scientist's talent according to the new understanding—[1448]mathematicians and poets even made use of it in the same way, says d'Alembert.[1449] All this shows that the specifically Enlightenment-era blending of speculation and empiricism, on which also the new idea of the whole was founded, had its particular intellectual-historical presuppositions. It also shows that the supplementation—and to a large extent the replacement—of the intellect by faculties related to sensibility in the process of cognition was no longer perceived as an impairment of the rationality of knowledge. Behind this conception, however, lies the existential concept of knowledge and the corresponding anti-intellectualist understanding of rationalism, to which we now turn.

1445 *Hist. Natur.*, 1. Disc., *De la Manière etc.* = *Oeuvres* 7 A–B.
1446 Zilsel, *Entstehung des Geniebegriffes*, especially 143, 155 f.
1447 Fabian, *Naturwissenschaftler als Originalgenie*, especially 48 f., 53, 55.
1448 Omastreiter, *Naturwissenschaft und Literaturkritik*, 59 ff.
1449 *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 237.

3. Rationalism in Anti-Intellectualist Perspective

a) The Existential Concept of Knowledge

The development of the existential concept of knowledge runs parallel to the gradual establishment of the view that pure intellect is not the essence of spirit, let alone of the human being as a whole. Until now, intellect had been regarded as the bearer of eternal truths, entirely independent of the fluctuations of empiricism or of the emotional life. Upon the untouchability of intellect rested the preeminence of the mathematical and the logical. But the former was degraded in the struggle against Cartesian epistemology, and the latter was dismissed as identical with scholastic syllogistics. The necessary result of this double rejection of intellectualism was therefore an extensive displacement of logic by psychology. The ahistorical or colorless character of the logical recedes before the continuously developing multiplicity of the psychic. The genetic depiction of the emergence of the faculties—and even of logical categories—replaces the construction of logical tables that claimed to grasp reality through their contradiction-free classification. In contrast to the statics of intellect, the dynamic plasticity of the other faculties now asserts itself, and thus historical consideration gains the upper hand. We already said why the empiricist approach in epistemology necessarily entailed a genetic-historical consideration, just as the elevation of matter made evolutionary conceptions in biology plausible; and we also noted that, in the polemic against the primacy of the question of being in the sense of traditional metaphysics, the priority of knowledge or of the knowing subject was asserted within the framework of the modern primacy of anthropology. This finds expression in the profound transformation of the concept of metaphysics, which had already been foreshadowed in Bacon,[1450] but which was only fully realized through the Enlightenment turn to psychic sensibility. The term metaphysics now is very often used to designate the science of the psychic faculties, in which the first principles of all knowledge are supposed to be located. Thus Condillac distinguishes between the "ambitious" old metaphysics, which set out to solve all the riddles of the world, and the

1450 *Advancement of Learning* II = *Works* III, 353.

"more modest" new one: the latter "proportionne ses recherches à la faiblesse de l'esprit humain" and leaves aside all sorcery in order to confine itself to "les choses comme elles sont en effet".[1451] Only the precise knowledge of the human faculties thus allows for secure insights into the nature of our knowledge, which gains in theoretical importance because, from the standpoint of the new consideration, our world-image can only be a function of the nature of our cognition. In this sense, metaphysics is now epistemology as the ultimate knowledge. The ultimate things—they are to be found in the constitution of man, which again implies that the new metaphysics could explain the possibility and emergence of the old.

It would be instructive to trace the denigration of logic against the background of the new determination of the essence of metaphysics in thinkers who, precisely because of their clear insight into the nature of the scientific method or their personal systematic engagement with it, were less ready than others to abandon logic altogether. D'Alembert also sees the task of metaphysics in the composition of the "histoire de nos pensées" and adds that all other possible objects of metaphysical consideration would be enveloped in an "obscurité impénétrable".[1452] Locke, he says, created the new metaphysics just as Newton created the new physics, by making of it what it properly ought to have been, namely "la physique expérimentale de l'âme".[1453] Now, if the goal of the new metaphysics is the genetic investigation of our ideas, then logic in turn should compare the ideas with one another. D'Alembert knows the dilemma: ideas cannot be compared if their origin is unknown, yet one cannot investigate their origin without employing logical categories. However, he does not want to break the *circulus vitiosus* by positing the priority of logic, but rather tends toward the opposite. As he says, we do not actually construct our metaphysics with the help of scientific logic, but with a natural logic, for "il y a en nous une logique naturelle et comme d'instinct." Since this instinctive logic has rather little to do with the acts of the intellect, the primacy of the science of the faculties over logic remains intact; only after the origin of our ideas has become

1451 *Essai sur les origines des connaissances humaines*, Introduction = *Oeuvres* I, 3 A.

1452 *Elements* IV § 1, cf. VI = *Oeuvres* II, 41 f., 126 ff.

1453 *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 275 f.

known should philosophical investigation proceed to actual logic.[1454] Thus logic cannot radically ground nor speak the very first or last word. This also becomes evident in d'Alembert's classification of the sciences, which is undertaken not with reference to logical categories, but primarily according to the hierarchy of the faculties. What d'Alembert calls the "exposition métaphysique" of the whole domain of the sciences is meant to be a "division générale de nos connaissances suivant nos trois facultés" (namely: memory, reason, imagination); and the "exposition historique," which is supposed to complement the preceding "exposition métaphysique," again consists in the depiction of the successive phases of the history of science, each of which is to be characterized by the predominance of one faculty.[1455] Systematic and historical consideration are thus connected on the basis of the structure or hierarchy of the faculties—and this connection is made possible only by the displacement of the logical by the psychological.

The existential concept of knowledge arises within this development—or rather it sums it up. It signifies the rooting of knowledge in a sensibly conditioned existence, one that is in constant interaction with the sensuous environment and is shaped therein, a plastic existence. Two complementary, striking formulations can outline it. Rousseau explains the prioritization of the existential after the displacement of the intellect with the following words: "Exister pour nous, c'est sentir; notre sensibilité est incontestablement antérieure à notre intelligence... À certains égards les idées sont des sentiments et les sentiments sont des idées".[1456] And Vauvenargues establishes the connection between the intensity of the existential—or of sensation—and the degree of perfection of knowledge: "Celui qui a un grand sens sait beaucoup"[1457] (both aspects are combined in a sentence of Humboldt's: "Was... das letzte Resultat aller vereinigten Kräfte ist, kann wieder nur mit vereinigten Kräften verstanden werden.[1458]") The displacement of the intellectual-logical by the historical-psychological, however, had to pave the way for a perspectivist conception of truth, which, not least because of its moral-

1454 *Éléments* XIII = *Oeuvres* II, 240 ff.
1455 *Discours préliminaire* = *Oeuvres* I, 235, 242, 247 f.
1456 *Émile* IV = *Oeuvres* IV, 600 and note a.
1457 *Réflexions et Maximes* No. 898 = *Oeuvres*, 488.
1458 *Über den Geschlechtsunterschied* = *Werke* I, 270.

philosophical consequences, appeared questionable. For whoever questioned the supposedly unshakable immutability of the intellect was not far from doing the same with regard to the eternal validity of rational moral commands. If our world-image is a function of our faculties or of our existential situation, then the same can certainly apply to morality. In Leibniz's critique of Locke, this thought plays an essential role,[1459] while Diderot's *Lettre sur les Aveugles* ultimately expresses the embarrassment resulting from the extreme psychological relativization of all statements about the world and man.[1460] Logic and morality thus shared the same fate in this respect, and it was no accident that Kant—whose "Copernican turn," by the way, is nothing other than the explicit adoption of the new determination of the concept of metaphysics—[1461]supplemented his distinction between pure and applied logic (the latter being "subjected to the rules of the correct use of the understanding under the subjective empirical conditions taught by psychology") with the remark that pure logic relates to applied logic just as pure morality relates to an empirically oriented doctrine of virtue.[1462] — This small preliminary reminder of the moral-philosophical dimension of the problem is meant in advance to explain the seriousness with which the debate over the new concept of knowledge was conducted simultaneously on several levels. The implications of the new mode of thought were felt everywhere, because it sought to reshape all domains according to its spirit.

A discussion of the existential concept of knowledge on the basis of fundamental concepts of Enlightenment aesthetics is worthwhile in several respects. For aesthetics—besides psychology, which was stimulated by the historical-empiricist approach in epistemology—forms one of the fields in which the Enlightenment accomplished significant work. As part of the Enlightenment, it can be understood in its general outlines within the framework of the detachment from Cartesianism,[1463] and it too carries out, in its own way, the turn from being to knowing as the principal object of interest, in that it no longer

1459 *Nouveaux Essais* I, ch. 2 = *Philosophische Schriften* V, 89 f.

1460 *Oeuvres* I, 329 f.

1461 In this sense, Kant calls his "mode of investigation" the "metaphysics of metaphysics," see the letter to M. Herz written after May 11, 1781, *AA* X, 252.

1462 *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 77 ff. = *AA* III, 76 ff.

1463 Very general remarks on this by Knabe, *Schlüsselbegriffe*, 14 ff.

investigates the rule for the creation of the artwork, but rather the states of the aesthetically active subject.[1464] Its particular weight shows itself, however, in the fact that it coined concepts which themselves shaped the age and impressed themselves upon it as a kind of seal. One such concept, which was recognized as such even by contemporaries,[1465] is the concept of taste. In fact, systematic investigations of it only appear around 1700 and become increasingly rare after 1800. In Boileau's principal work published in 1674, the term does not appear at all; tellingly, however, the author uses it in the preface to the 1701 edition.[1466] In purely conceptual-historical terms, it must be noted, however, that fundamental concepts of the new aesthetics, including the concept of taste, had already been prepared or discussed within classical theories under different names, such as *délicatesse*, *sentiment*, etc.[1467] Yet their status was a fundamentally different one, and this also had substantive consequences. The taste of the (French) 17th century is above all a "rational taste" and thus intellectually-Cartesian in character.[1468] Boileau linked his exhortation to artists: "aimez donc la raison"[1469] with the conviction that "rien n'est beau que la vérité".[1470] Taken together, these statements imply that (aesthetic) truth is what can be grasped clearly and distinctly by the intellect. In aesthetic terminology, this can be defined as *decorum* (πρέπον), which itself can be reduced to analogy and proportion

1464 Cassirer, *Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 422.

1465 Thus La Harpe writes in 1786 that terms like *génie* and *goût* were unknown in the 17th century; "cette façon de parler ... est de notre siècle," *Lycée* I, Introduction, p. VII, col. B.

1466 Knabe, *Schlüsselbegriffe*, 244.

1467 Bäumler, *Irrationalitätsproblem*, 29 ff.; he follows Stein, *Entstehung der neueren Ästhetik*, 86 ff.

1468 Schmücker, *Entwicklung des Geschmacksbegriffes*, 130 ff. Schmücker rightly emphasizes that Gracián's concept of taste, related to the art of life, can never be separated from reason, even if it is not identical with it (124 f.). Despite the fundamental difference between Descartes and the Classicists on the authority of Antiquity (Mimard, *Variations de la raison*, 188 ff.), and the loose personal relation of the latter to philosophy (Stein, *Entstehung*, 33 ff.), the intellectual kinship between Classicists and the intellectualist ideal of Cartesianism must not be overlooked (cf. Stein, *Entstehung*, 48 f.).

1469 *Art poétique* I, v. 37 = *Oeuvres*, 161.

1470 *Oeuvres*, 140.

(*ratio*), that is, to quasi-mathematical structures. Although concepts like harmony, proportion, etc., continue to live on in the new aesthetics, now in place of the intellectually graspable or constructible and externally visible *decorum* steps the feeling, internal, almost secret activity of taste; the judgment of the intellect must yield to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.[1471] Inexactness or free, plastic movement of line and speech now becomes the ideal (this, of course, goes hand in hand with the change in the feeling for natural beauty),[1472] for it resists mathematical capture and thereby withdraws from the competence of the intellect; the *je ne sais quoi* gradually dies out precisely because, in the expanded form of feeling or taste, it becomes almost the rule—that is, because the classical aesthetics, on whose discreet undermining it actually lived, no longer exists.[1473] The elevation of pleasure and displeasure to aesthetic fundamental categories now pairs with that historical consideration of psychic phenomena which strives to derive the higher faculties step by step from the lower: for otherwise, as said, it could not proceed historically, and thus could not abolish the primacy of the intellect.

The concept of taste fully satisfies the desiderata of the new attitude, especially since it is flexible enough to allow for tactically necessary reinterpretations. Its suitability for referring to both the sensuous and the spiritual not only suggests a cooperation between the two but can just as well be understood as an indication of an interweaving or a transition. Since taste makes judgments, thus conveying knowledge, it seems to embody the rooting of knowledge in sensuous existence itself, indeed to form the proof of the possibility of knowledge without the mediation of the intellect or through mere intensification of existence. The coupling of purely sensuous taste and knowledge is admittedly old—*sapere* and *sapientia* are etymologically related, and this was at least known to some Romans—[1474]yet under the present intellectual-historical conditions, it gains a wholly new explosiveness. Already in one of the first major expositions of the principles of the new aesthetics (1719), taste in the purely sensuous sense and artistic taste are explicitly linked. Just as food tastes

1471 See the good remarks by Klein, *There is no disputing*, 144.

1472 See above, Ch. IV, Sect. 3 a.

1473 Köhler, *Je ne sais quoi*, 50 f.

1474 Lüdt, *Zur Geschichte des Begriffes sapientia*, especially 203 f.

immediately and not first as a result of mathematically acquired insights into its constitution, writes Du Bos, so the judgment of a work of art occurs without the involvement of the intellect; here a "sixième sens" is at work, whose organs are in us, though we cannot see them, and whose operations precede all "déliberation" and all "raisonnement".[1475] This sense, like the others, depends on our "organisation," and therefore changes through a "changement physique";[1476] "c'est le physique qui donne la loi au moral".[1477] The task of the intellect (*raison*) is to rationalize and justify the decision of taste or feeling.[1478] But even Montesquieu, who adopts a much more moderate overall position, emphasizes the absolute priority of "sentiment" in the judgment of taste. Taste is not "une connaissance de théorie," but "application prompte et exquise des règles même qu'on ne connaît pas"—or it is that which "nous rattache à une chose par le Sentiment." To be sure, the soul recognizes not only through *sentiments* but also through *idées*; nevertheless, there is essentially nothing of such intellectual purity that it would not have to be first sensed through the senses.[1479] The attachment to the sensuous, which in Du Bos was achieved through the reference to physical constitution, occurs in Montesquieu via the pathway of the feeling of pleasure. The secret source of beauty becomes visible when we discover "les causes des plaisirs de notre âme"; only on the basis of such knowledge is a refinement of taste possible.[1480] Montesquieu does not deny the involvement of reason and practice here, as his distinction between *goût naturel* and *goût acquis* shows.[1481] Yet the priorities are not to be reversed. Even Voltaire, who draws a much sharper line between *goût sensuel* and *goût intellectuel* and particularly emphasizes the role of practice and education, defines taste as a "discernement prompt, comme celui de la langue et du palais, et qui prévient comme lui la réflexion".[1482] However, Voltaire believes that even sensual taste can

1475 *Réflexions critiques*, II, sect. 22, p. 341 ff.
1476 *op. cit.*, I, sect. 49, p. 514.
1477 *op. cit.*, II, sect. 19, p. 326.
1478 *op. cit.*, II, sect. 22, p. 340 f.
1479 *Essai sur le goût*, *Oeuvres* I (III), 615.
1480 *loc. cit.*, 612.
1481 *loc. cit.*, 613.
1482 *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Art. *Goût* = *OC* XIX, 270.

err, and therefore he raises—precisely in view of its weakness compared to the intellectual taste—the demand for the conscious cultivation of the latter all the more emphatically. Thus, the position of Du Bos is initially accepted, only to be considerably watered down or reinterpreted immediately afterward. The reasons for this we will see shortly.

The displacement of the intellect—the traditional bearer of fixed truths independent of the plastic historicity of sensuously rooted existence—had to encourage a perspectivist conception of truth. Even in the field of aesthetics, the denigration of the logical in favor of the psychological appeared in the form of a challenge to mathematics. Already at its earliest appearance in England, the concept of taste was defined in opposition to mathematics: taste, wrote Howard, refers to the concrete, while mathematics, by contrast, is applied to all possible objects regardless of their particular nature. However, it was not concern for the authority of mathematics but rather the danger of relativism—which would ultimately make any systematic art criticism impossible—that called forth Dryden's prompt reaction against the newly established concept of taste.[1483] The lines of future controversy could thus be drawn so early because the logically possible solutions to the problem were already apparent. For obvious reasons, the rejection of mathematics and the emphasis on the relativity of taste belong together logically and in intellectual history. Du Bos had already expressed his disdain for mathematics in his famous comparison between sensuous and art-related taste cited above; moreover, he holds little esteem for the systematic spirit or Cartesianism.[1484] For him, it makes no sense, for instance, to build systems in aesthetics when the principles are so "vagues" that they can not only be interpreted arbitrarily but also be judged differently in every instance depending on the observer. It must be so if principles depend on place and time.[1485] The thesis of the anchoring of taste in biostructure is now supplemented by the detailed account of the influence of climate on the human mind; man and fruits, for example, are equally conditioned

1483 On the concept of taste in Howard and Dryden's reactions see the good account by Klein, *There is no disputing*, 9 ff.

1484 *Réflexions critiques*, II, sect. 23, pp. 360 f., 366 (cf. generally Lombard, *Du Bos*, 194 ff.).

1485 *loc. cit.*, 366 f.

by climate.[1486] Thus, the emergence of aesthetics from pathology in Du Bos[1487] leads directly to relativism or perspectivism. Rather than climate, it is historical—that is, sociopolitical—changes that, according to Cartaud de la Villate, underlie the same attitude; Cartaud, incidentally, offers a sharp attack on mathematics beyond the obligatory condemnation of Descartes and praise of Locke, deeming it superfluous even for technical progress.[1488] Historical changes in general had already earlier, namely during the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, been cited as reasons for the relativity of taste (Cartaud is naturally a fanatical partisan of the Moderns). Perrault distinguishes between "beautés universelles et absolues" and "particulières et relatives," corresponding to the "goût et la mode du siècle" or to "le goût particulier".[1489] The time-boundedness of taste is here emphasized against the claim of ancient models to eternal validity—that is, it serves a limited polemical purpose and is not yet consistent relativism. For the same Perrault elsewhere speaks of the gradual perfection of taste over the centuries, which makes a repetition of some of the errors of ancient writers in modernity impossible.[1490] Here, however, the existence of an objective aesthetic norm is implied. This, as well as the aforementioned assumption of "beautés universelles," shows that the awakening of historical sense through the *Querelle* was not strong enough to allow the true beginning of modern historicism to be traced back to it—although it worked in preparation for it.[1491] Consistent relativism or perspectivism first requires the insight into the dependence of the spiritual on the sensuous, that is, the elevation of matter on all levels, so that eventually even sociohistorical sensibility becomes a determining—that is, relativizing—factor of spirit.[1492] But this goes along with the (not merely social-historical but anthropological) thesis of the rooting of spirit in biostructure. This

1486 *op. cit.*, II, sect. 14 and 18, pp. 250, 310 ff.

1487 According to a formulation by Stein, *Entstehung der neueren Ästhetik*, 235 f.

1488 *Essais historiques et philosophiques sur le goût*, 258 ff., 274, 277 ff.; *Pensées critiques sur les mathématiques*, 186 ff.

1489 *Parallèle* II, 48 ff.

1490 *op. cit.*, III, 146.

1491 On this influence see Naves, *Goût de Voltaire*, 108 ff.

1492 Extensive discussion on this in Ch. VI, Sect. 4; cf. above, Ch. II, Sect. 3 b.

entire complex is beautifully reflected in the fact that it is precisely the historian and sociologist Montesquieu who formulates anthropological-epistemological considerations that go beyond the phenomenalism of Maupertuis or d'Alembert and carry through the perspectivist conception of truth according to the inner logic of the existential concept of knowledge. It is no accident that we find them in the familiar *Essai sur le goût*, where we read the following: "Notre manière d'être est entièrement arbitraire; nous pouvions avoir été faits comme nous sommes, ou autrement. Mais, si nous avions été faits autrement, nous aurions senti autrement... toutes les lois établies sur ce que notre machine est d'une certaine façon, seraient différentes, si notre machine n'était pas de cette façon".[1493] Perspectivism, through its extension to the species level, thus becomes so radical that even the possibility of a consensus on questions of taste within the framework of the existing biostructure loses much of its attractiveness: for the suspicion of illusion has by now become too strong and too widespread.

Looking back over the development of the entire century, La Harpe could rightly remark that concepts such as *goût* were "expressions abstraites en elles-mêmes, vagues et indéfinies dans leur acception, susceptibles d'équivoques et d'arbitraire".[1494] Diderot observed something similar.[1495] The substantive vagueness of such concepts was, however, not primarily due to the fact that they—or synonymous terms—had already been used by classical aesthetics in a different sense.[1496] Rather, they became ambiguous in the struggle between schools, which was ignited not least by the question of the objectivity or relativity of taste. Since the thesis of relativity directly (Du Bos) or indirectly (theories of pleasure and displeasure) rested on the assumption of a dependence of taste on biostructure, its refutation had to mean an emphasis on the intellectual factor in the formation of objective taste, whereby (still surviving) motives of classical aesthetics were taken up. Formey explicitly traces the "équivoques" concerning

1493 *OC* I (III), 613 f.
1494 *Lycée* I, Introduction V, col. B.
1495 *Encyclopédie*, Art. *Bon Sens* = *OC* XIII, 489 ("il n'y a rien de plus relatif...").
1496 Thus at Boileau the *Bon Sens*, despite his high appreciation of reason, sometimes appears as the supreme instance, see e.g. *Art poétique*, I, vv. 28, 45 = *Oeuvres*, 161 f.

the concept of taste back to the existence of two fundamental tendencies, one of which wanted to restrict taste exclusively to cognition, the other exclusively to feeling.[1497] The way he seeks to bridge the opposition and resolve the conflict characterizes very well the new situation created by the rehabilitation of sensibility in epistemology and aesthetics. Even those, namely, who endeavor to uphold the objectivity of taste by pointing to its intellectual component can no longer simply bypass the sensuous conditions of taste formation. Thus, for Formey, "goût suprême" is "le plus haut degré de connaissance joint au sentiment le plus exquis".[1498] In its elementary form, taste indeed rests on feeling, but this is only a "perception confuse",[1499] and it must be ennobled with the help of "lois antérieures et immuables, celles de la Raison et du Bon Sens".[1500] Via the distinction between coarse and refined taste, ultimately "le dictamen intérieur de la raison" becomes decisive.[1501] For Batteux as well, feeling had only a preparatory role to fulfill and had to recede once the maturity for the reception of *idées claires* was reached.[1502] Batteux, however, seeks to ground the objectivity of taste in the concordance with nature,[1503] though even this could be interpreted very differently, and therefore Batteux does not find it incompatible with the thesis that objective taste could ultimately only be achieved through the gradual subordination of feeling to reason, or through the processing of the former by the latter.[1504]

The objectivity of taste had to be accompanied by a curbing of the freedoms of genius, which in Batteux occurs through the formulation that genius is not a "force aveugle" but rather a "raison active qui s'exerce avec art sur un objet".[1505] We understand this decisive shift when we consider that the concept of genius, initially brought forward by defenders of the Moderns as tangible proof of the

1497 *Analyse*, 176.
1498 *op. cit.*, 190.
1499 *op. cit.*, 180.
1500 *op. cit.*, 190.
1501 *op. cit.*, 186.
1502 *Cours*, I, 53 f.
1503 *op. cit.*, I, 80.
1504 *op. cit.*, I, 47, 48.
1505 *op. cit.*, I, 10 f.

ever-renewed overcoming of the rigid patterns of Antiquity,[1506] now threatened to shatter the binding force of all rules. In this respect, it acted similarly to the concept of taste, because it likewise represented a version—articulated in the language of the new aesthetics—of the existential concept of knowledge, which shattered intellectualistic symmetries and hierarchies. Genius is now doubly unclassifiable, at least from the standpoint of intellectualistic classifications and valuations: it draws its strength from faculties such as imagination,[1507] which, according to the new associationist psychology, processes and combines material acquired through the senses, and beyond that, since it is, in its pulsating individuality and creativity, scarcely related to the general binding character of intellect for all men, it must obviously spring from the biostructure of the genius. Both aspects appear in Du Bos, who on the one hand regards imagination as the faculty *par excellence* of genius, while on the other he traces genius back to "un arrangement heureux des organes du cerveau" and the "qualité du sang".[1508] Gerard does not go so far on this latter point, but the main concern of his work also lies in explaining the highest intellectual achievements through elementary or sensibility-dependent factors according to (Humean) associationist psychology. He wants to explain genius based on the "simple qualities of the human mind",[1509] and accordingly he sees "the first hint of every invention" in "sense and memory".[1510] However, the principal activity of the genius occurs at the higher level of imagination. Genius means "invention",[1511] and this is achieved through imagination,[1512] whose power in turn rests on the richness of associations.[1513] Imagination, not reason, discovers new ideas,[1514] and even in the demonstrations of reason, "often the

1506 Perrault, *Parallèle*, II, 65; III, 157.
1507 On the elevation of imagination in connection with the development of the new concept of genius see Stein, *Entstehung der neueren Ästhetik*, 136 ff.
1508 *Réflexions critiques* II, sect. 2 = p. 14.
1509 *Essay on Genius*, 4.
1510 *op. cit.*, 96.
1511 *op. cit.*, 8.
1512 *op. cit.*, 29 ff.
1513 *op. cit.*, 41 ff.
1514 *op. cit.*, 34.

conviction [is] intuitive".[1515] Gerard by no means wishes to discard reason, but every time he acknowledges its usefulness, he simultaneously points out its limits and dependencies.[1516] Perhaps his view of the relationship between (ingenious) imagination and reason can best be understood in light of his remarks on taste: judgment is indeed necessary for the perfection of taste, but it can never achieve it without a corresponding "acuteness of the internal senses".[1517] Nonetheless, Gerard's effort is obvious: not to let the activity of imagination appear as an ungovernable magnitude. Yet he does not do this—despite emphasizing the possibility of cooperation between imagination and reason, at least in certain cases and phases of the creative process—on Batteux's intellectualistic model, but rather by introducing an instance that can sketch out guidelines and exert corrective influence, while itself supposed to be only partially governed by intellect. This instance in Gerard, as in many other aestheticians of the century,[1518] is taste itself, which must critically accompany the activity of the (artistic, if not scientific) genius.[1519] Voltaire adopts a similar position. Since he believes in the binding force of truly good taste,[1520] he wants to make it serve the work of genius, which, if left to itself, could often go astray.[1521] This is outwardly the solution to a problem, but fundamentally the formulation of a dilemma. They did not want to fall back into intellectualism, and yet they could not let the plasticity of the existential concept of knowledge degenerate into arbitrariness. Diderot's contradictory views on genius reflect the situation. For him, genius is at times a fiery creative enthusiasm, at times a pathological condition, at times sober and cool observation, far removed from all forms of sensitivity or sentimentality.[1522] Also in this question, as in

1515 *op. cit.*, 281.
1516 *op. cit.*, e.g., 72, 283.
1517 *op. cit.*, 400.
1518 On the general tendency to complement or correct genius through taste, cf. Naves, *Goût de Voltaire*, 399 ff.
1519 *Essay on Genius*, 392 ff.
1520 *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article *Goût* = *OC* XIX, 273.
1521 *op. cit.*, article *Génie* = *OC* XIX, 246.
1522 See the fine analysis by Dieckmann, *Diderot's Concept of Genius*, in: *Studien*, 18 ff., 22 f.

many others, Diderot's work appears like a true inventory of the various Enlightenment currents in their contradictions.

It was certainly easier to correct genius through taste than to justify the infallibility or objectivity of taste itself. If Formey and Batteux could directly appeal to the intellect, this avenue was closed to the empirically oriented—and they made up the great majority. From their point of view, only non-intellectual faculties—more or less, better or worse—were allowed to replace what had until then been represented by the intellect, namely generality and binding force; otherwise only consistent relativism would remain. The concept of taste thus gained such solid popularity because it seemed suitable not only to build a bridge between the sensuous and the spiritual, but also to compensate for empiricist relativism—while itself resting on empirical principles and thus appearing as tangible proof of their ability to overcome relativism by their own strength.[1523] In this respect, Hume's argumentation is illuminating. For him, the search for the one true beauty, etc., is in vain, especially since judgments about it depend on the "disposition of the organs".[1524] Thus, if the objectivity of taste is not anchored in the nature of things, it must be found in the subject. Given the assumed "great resemblance between mental and bodily taste",[1525] which recalls Du Bos, the intellect of this subject likewise cannot guarantee the objectivity of taste judgments. The only possible seat of the "universal" principles of taste thus remains the "common sentiments of human nature".[1526] Yet precisely that which is supposed to establish the universality of taste must, even according to Hume himself, account for the striking differences from time to time, and even from person to person. Universality is visible and effective only when the "organs of internal sensation" function perfectly. Because this is not always the case, differences arise,[1527] where either the feeling of pleasure accompanying aesthetic taste fails to appear or it takes a wrong direction. Human nature is nonetheless such that, under certain conditions, it can feel pleasure; upon this, the universality or binding force of taste is supposed to rest. D'Alembert

1523 Cf. Klein, *There is no disputing*, 146.
1524 *On the Standard of Taste*, *Essays* I, 269.
1525 *loc. cit.*, 273.
1526 *loc. cit.*, 280.
1527 *loc. cit.*, 278, 272.

thinks similarly. His thesis that "le goût n'est pas arbitraire" is not supported by an appeal to the predominance of reason (on the contrary, he emphasizes that in analyzing taste, intellectual acuteness alone does not suffice—none of the "sens qui composent le goût" may be missing), but rather by the assumption that the source of pleasure and displeasure is exclusively within us, and thus, with regard to feelings of pleasure and displeasure, "règles générales et invariables de goût" can be found.[1528] The logical Achilles' heel of this position is easy to detect. Due to the nature of human nature, I can indeed expect that I will feel pleasure or displeasure, but this does not yet say what will trigger such sensations—thus when I am to expect pleasure and when displeasure. Hume's distinction between perfect and imperfect functioning of the corresponding organs does not help at least as long as it remains undetermined which organs, at what time, and in which persons, have functioned perfectly. This question cannot be answered without at least implicitly making a judgment about the nature not only of human nature but also of the objects of aesthetic enjoyment, thus about beauty itself and as such. By demonstrating the necessity of the *that*, the necessary character of the *what* is not yet specified—and precisely on that it depends, since taste cannot be thought without reference to a particular object.

This weakness of the empiricist justification of the objectivity of taste was openly, if rather incidentally and *malgré soi*, acknowledged by Burke. Although he does not conceive of taste one-sidedly, but sees in it the cooperation of *perception*, *imagination*, and *rational faculty*, he nevertheless does not wish to ground its binding force in the latter, but rather in the common "groundwork of all these in the human mind": "for as the senses are the great originals of our ideas, and consequently of all our pleasures, if they are not uncertain and arbitrary, the whole groundwork of Taste is common to all".[1529] Nevertheless: "when it is said, Taste cannot be disputed, it can only mean, that no one can strictly answer what pleasure or pain some particular man may be find from the Taste of some particular thing. This, indeed, cannot be disputed; but we may dispute ... concerning the things which are

1528 *Réflexions sur l'usage et sur l'abus de la Philosophie dans les matières de goût*, *Oeuvres* III, 416 f.
1529 *Inquiry*, 15.

naturally pleasing or disagreeable to the sense".[1530] Not everyone was prepared to make such concessions, yet already the great amount of labor spent on proving the objectivity of taste was a sure sign of smoldering unease. Additional criteria were introduced, but the logical structure of the problem did not permit a final solution. Even Horne, despite the significance of his contributions to particular aesthetic questions, did not get further in principle. Since he ultimately regards all knowledge as sensory knowledge,[1531] within the framework of the genetic approach of empiricism he must describe the transition from bodily to "more refined" pleasure as a "transition sweet and easy".[1532] Relativism in the form of the unpredictability of genius and the unbridled activity of imagination is to be warded off by good taste[1533] (for the acquisition of which, incidentally, *study and practice* or *education and reflection*[1534] are necessary: this is particularly emphasized when an objectifying or corrective function is attributed to taste)—and the objectivity of taste is again to be proven with regard to the constitution of human nature or on the basis of the principle of pleasure.[1535] The further criterion that Horne introduced to safeguard the universality and binding force of taste judgments—namely, the *consensus gentium* or the standards set by society—[1536]is, however, just as little suited as the appeal to sensuously rooted human nature to bridge the gap between *that* and *what*. In both cases, it is ultimately an attempt to summon up precisely that against relativism from which relativism itself arose.

Through the connection of *taste* and *moral sense*—[1537]which is meant structurally and functionally, since *taste*, just like *moral sense*, is supposed to keep blind passions in check—[1538]Horne aims to support the objectivity of taste through ultimate world-view arguments. This question is indeed seen as an aspect of the general problem of value;

1530 *op. cit.*, 6.
1531 *Elements*, I, 1.
1532 *op. cit.*, I, 5.
1533 *op. cit.*, I, 13 n.; I, 27.
1534 *op. cit.*, I, 6 n.; III, 274.
1535 *op. cit.*, I, 14 f.
1536 *op. cit.*, III, 271 f., 269.
1537 *op. cit.*, I, 6.
1538 *op. cit.*, I, 10.

the objectivity of taste and the objectivity of values stand and fall together. Arbitrariness in matters of taste would ultimately also mean arbitrariness regarding good and evil—but that is ruled out.[1539] The connection between taste and *moral sense* is indeed close at hand, since taste, at least indirectly, must also refer to values or to things to which a special value (such as beauty) is attributed. Thus, the study of the existential concept of knowledge in the form it assumes within the new aesthetics is worthwhile also because here the transition from knowing to valuing, or rather the intertwining of the two, almost automatically takes place. At the same time, in the search for a final grounding of objective taste both aesthetically and morally, a third dimension, namely the ontological, becomes visible, so that knowing, valuing, and being (at first as the being of the knowing and valuing subject, which structurally belongs together with being as the whole of the world) ultimately flow together. Indeed, only an explicit or implicit new ontology—despite all polemic against the priority of the question of being in the sense of old metaphysics—[1540]could provide that firm foundation which, after the removal of the intellect, was missed. The existential concept of knowledge could only claim objectivity for itself if its structure, or the constitution of the subject bearing it, were analogous to that of being (in the new sense); and it could (as *moral sense*) only establish morally binding guidelines if already this ontological foundation, which it was to condense or embody in its most specific act of knowledge, originally contained a normative component. In traditional metaphysics, the grounding of the objectivity of knowledge through ultimate arguments often took the form of the thesis of the direct derivation of the human mind from the divine, whereby the (properly, "according to its essence," etc., functioning) human mind was, as it were, condemned to grasp being correctly (pre-established harmony between subject and object of knowledge, or knowledge as tautology). The formal structure of the grounding remains the same among important representatives of the Enlightenment, but the content is fundamentally different. For now it is not a spirit that is connected with another, purer and higher spirit, but a complete, sensuously rooted existence that is intertwined with the new idea of the whole, that is, with nature.

1539 *op. cit.*, III, 261 f.

1540 Cf. our remarks at the beginning of section 4 of this chapter.

An early and decisive example of this constellation of thought is found in Shaftesbury. From his rejection of dualism on the anthropological and cosmological levels, and from the elimination of evil from the world, arises the possibility of finding the correct or natural orientation in knowledge and morality through an activity in which not merely the intellect, but the whole human existence participates, which by definition carries within itself the required driving forces. (The same schema could, of course, also appear with pessimistic signs, as indeed happened.)[1541] Taste in matters of aesthetics and morality thus does not result from an intellectual act that primarily aims at the logical compelling force of its respective judgment, but from a well-tempered existential elevation or intensity (enthusiasm in the good sense, to use Shaftesbury's vocabulary), in which senses and intellect, desire (desiring the beautiful and the good) and devotion, the conscious and the unconscious, flow into one another and bring forth a nonplusultra of "true" happiness and at the same time of intellectual clarity. Whoever acts in this sense does so as a whole human being; just as taste cannot be acquired without practiced sensory organs, so too it cannot be acquired without mind—and just as little without the spontaneous desire for the good and the beautiful, nor without the meaningful processing of these desires. Shaftesbury knows and emphasizes how laborious it is to cultivate the innate and to attain perfect taste,[1542] but at the same time he never forgets that taste can only be the perfection of the natural, the most faithful possible following of nature: "Justness of Taste ... is requir'd in one who pretends to follow Nature".[1543] Shaftesbury's statement: "'tis not merely what we call Principle, but a Taste which governs men"[1544] is thus not to be understood as a resigned acknowledgment of unpredictable human arbitrariness, but as a forceful preference for a principle of knowledge and morality whose higher objectivity consists in the fact that it mobilizes all layers of human existence and rests upon all of them, and thereby does far greater justice to nature, i.e., to being, than do principles grasped only intellectually, which reside in a

1541 See below, Chapter VI, Section 3 b, where the connection between Shaftesbury's ontology and moral philosophy is also treated more extensively.
1542 *Characteristicks*, II, 401; III, 164 f., 186.
1543 *op. cit.*, I, 355.
1544 *op. cit.*, III, 177.

single faculty and may suppress the others. The objectivity of the former thus lies in its quality of not merely grasping nature or following it, but of being nature itself. In mobilizing all his faculties for moral or aesthetic purposes, man sets into motion that which is beautiful and mighty nature within him. What appears at an elevated level as moral or aesthetic knowledge or action is in reality the quintessence of deeper existential dimensions. Such knowledge is an outflow of ("true") existence and not an abstractly grasped insight that bypasses or contradicts the needs of existence. It is man himself in his all-encompassing rootedness in nature. We now understand why, for instance, Rousseau, the apostle of nature, called "bon sens" the "instrument le plus universel de l'homme".[1545] It suffices that man is healthy, that is, uncorrupted in his naturalness, in order to possess good moral and aesthetic taste.

b) The Interweaving of Thinking and Willing, or of Reason and Feeling, and the Substantive Determination of Reason

Insight into the ontological background of the existential concept of knowledge will enable us to grasp the anti-intellectualist conception of rationalism in its full breadth, namely in its binding to specific substantive positions. After the rejection of the primacy of the question of being in the sense of traditional metaphysics, this binding often comes about only indirectly. Nevertheless, even if we do not place the investigation of the concept of nature, but precisely that of the concept of reason, at the forefront, we will still have to recognize that both its logical structure and its normative claim are unintelligible, indeed unthinkable, without the mentioned ontological background. Now, this investigation is not intended to rest with results that apply to the concept of reason in all times: that it is substantively vague, that it is taken sometimes in a subjective sense (faculty or activity of the soul) and sometimes in an objective sense (inner law of world order), that it refers both to correct cognition and to moral behavior, that it denotes the objectively binding in contrast to subjective arbitrariness, etc.[1546]

1545 *Émile* III = *Oeuvres* IV, 445.

1546 I fear that most of the meanings of the concept of reason that Dieckmann lists (*Reflexionen über den Begriff Raison*, in: *Studien*, 314) are unspecific in the sense that they could be found in almost all periods of intellectual history.

All this is so self-evident with regard to the history of thought as a whole that it does not help further, and its demonstration is superfluous. If we were to restrict ourselves again exclusively to linguistic-formal criteria, even the elementary distinction between intellectualist and anti-intellectualist positions would be difficult. For just as opponents of Descartes in the 18th century very often use terms like *bon sens*, *sens commun*, *discernement*, *sagacité*, etc., synonymously with *raison*,[1547] so too does Descartes himself occasionally call *raison bon sens*—[1548]following his time, which moreover (though not uniquely) tended to mix *raison normative* and *raison raisonnante*.[1549] With Descartes as well as, for example, with the Cambridge Platonists, the coupling of the concept of reason with concepts like sense or feeling was an indication of an existential intensity, but one that at that time still primarily, if not exclusively, was associated with the intensity or the sense of power of an intellect that, at least according to its own understanding, was freed from authorities and often operated intuitively.[1550] By contrast, the intensity of existential knowledge, as we have described it, sets a multilayered existence into motion, whose essence no longer lies in the intellect but is rooted in the sensuous, indeed in the biostructure. Therefore, we must take formal-linguistic similarities in statements about rational cognition and rational moral behavior only with great caution. Rather, in the question about the fate of reason, we must begin with the ontological elevation of matter, or with that rehabilitation of the sensuous that manifested itself in epistemology as the empiricist or sensualist current. In other words, we have to follow the process of the fundamental separation of reason from the intellect.

At the threshold of the Enlightenment, a profound transformation of the concept of reason takes place, corresponding to the replacement of the concept of substance in traditional metaphysics by the concept of function. Briefly put: reason gradually ceases to be a component (*μόριον* in the Platonic-Aristotelian sense) of the soul and becomes a stage of development of a spirit that arises gradually according to the genetic view of empiricist epistemology; it thus

1547 Knabe, *Schlüsselbegriffe*, 414.
1548 *Discours*, I = *AT* VI, 2.
1549 Michea, *Variations de la raison*, 183, 193.
1550 See above, Chapter III, Sections 2 and 3.

transforms from an originally existent entity into an activity that in turn requires certain preconditions in order to unfold fully or successfully, that is, it remains dependent on the cooperation of other faculties. This dramatic shift in the determination of the essence of reason[1551] is thus connected with the restriction of its cognitive ability and function through emerging empiricism; although reason in the sense of the autonomous intellect equipped with innate ideas still retains—albeit few—adherents in the 18th century.[1552] The dissolution of the intellect now entails the dissolution of the entire old hierarchy of faculties. Moreover: because the boundaries between the faculties become fluid, the dividing line between soul and body also becomes blurred; the intellect had indeed, in traditional understanding, been the stronghold of the soul, and thus after its collapse, the soul too must fall. The extent of this transformation is evident not only in the general devaluation of the concept of soul, but also in the terminology and language of even non-materialistic psychological literature. The interweaving of the psychic and the bodily, or the consideration of the former from the perspective of the latter, shows itself here in the increasing application of terms like *sensation* or *sensibilité* to psychic phenomena, or in their parallel use for elementary bodily and complex psychic phenomena.[1553] The same tendency toward unification appears in the simultaneous use of the concept of pleasure in reference to various domains or faculties (*plaisirs des sens, de l'esprit, du cœur*), which, though not new, was now accented in a fundamentally new way.[1554] Under these circumstances, the antithesis of *raison* and *passion* had to become rather uncertain.[1555]

Logic and structure of the new concept of rationalism stand under the sign of this general development. The connection will

1551 The revolutionary character of this shift is made especially clear by a comparison with Aristotle, who, despite his epistemological empiricism, saw reason as something that entered man "from outside" and ultimately considered it an emanation of the divine intellect (see Chapter I, note 11 and Chapter II, note 56). Plato's *nous* is characterized by separation from everything sensory—even in contrast to *διάνοια* (Chapter I, note 12).
1552 On this transformation of the concept of reason, see the excellent essay by Voitle, *Reason of the English Enlightenment*, especially pp. 1749, 1751, 1763.
1553 Sckommodau, *Der französische psychologische Wortschatz*, 31 ff., 116 ff.
1554 *op. cit.*, 63 ff.
1555 *op. cit.*, 99.

become more vivid if we present it through the internally coherent position of a single thinker rather than losing ourselves in the confusing abundance of the often stereotyped Enlightenment statements against the intellect and about reason. For our purpose, we could hardly wish for a more representative and influential thinker than Locke, who proves himself in this critical point as initiator and representative of a main Enlightenment current. Cartesian intellectualism is struck at its core when Locke posits the counter-thesis that thinking does not constitute the essence of the soul but only one of its operations.[1556] Thus, the path opens to the discovery of inner sensibility and the unconscious (cf. the reflections on the activity of the soul during sleep, which Locke presents in this context). The intellect is downgraded by being placed alongside other components or forms of life of the soul; it is rooted in the same unknowable essence from which its own adversaries in the soul—that is, the passions—also spring. There is therefore a deeper dimension in which an interweaving of the intellect with inner, and perhaps also with biological, sensibility takes place. This assumption makes understandable the decisive role that Locke assigns to the concept of *desire* (= uneasiness) in his theory of action. Contrary to later Enlightenment notions, the concept of will is here narrowly defined and clearly distinguished from *desire*, though the overall result is more or less the same. The will is thus here the executing organ of the mind, but the determination of the will by the mind is felt to be an "unsatisfactory," albeit generally correct, solution; the real question, rather, is what moves mind and will to behave in this or that way. The answer lies in the reference to desire or inner unrest, which sets mind and will into motion. Not ideas of good and evil, and not even the promised reward of virtue in heaven, but a need determines action ("this is the spring of action"), whose satisfaction represents the first step toward happiness.[1557] Thus, deeper than mind and will in Locke's narrower sense lies a driving force, which, however, remains connected with the latter as executing forces.

Locke's distinction between *desire* and *volition* was in fact only one between unconscious, instinct-driven willing and consciously directed willing, with the former proving stronger. In view of the

1556 *Essay*, II, 1 § 10 (= I, 128 ff.).
1557 *op. cit.*, II, 21, §§ 29–40 (= I, 330 ff.).

subordinate function of mind and will in Locke's narrower sense compared to *desire*, the entire psychic sensibility could be subsumed under an expanded concept of willing, since all its components—or all passions—are characterized by being set and kept in motion by a striving or a goal (Locke's *desire*). After the rejection of intellectualism, in other words, the interweaving of thinking and willing became the order of the day. It was not without reason, then, that Descartes had excluded a mixing of the two on the human level, even though he had initially accepted it at the divine level in his struggle against the scholastic binding of God to *ratio*.[1558] Spinoza had already made it unmistakably clear that the interweaving of *res extensa* and *res cogitans* at the metaphysical level had to be accompanied by the corresponding interweaving of *res cogitans* with psychic *res extensa* or sensibility. His formulation: "*Voluntas et intellectus unum et idem sunt*"[1559] was somewhat too terse and provocative to be taken up early or openly, but it nonetheless exerted its secret effect, especially after its content could be regarded as a consequence of Locke's theses, avoiding the awkward direct appeal to Spinoza. Locke's influence in this sense is evident in Voltaire. We read from him that the proponents of the thesis of the direct guidance of will by the intellect "*supposent que l'esprit agit physiquement sur la volonté*," as if each of these two entities were "*un petit être réel*." In reality, however, such designations as will, thinking, etc. are "*des idées abstraites*," employed conventionally, i.e., for the sake of communication. "*L'entendement et la volonté n'existent donc pas réellement comme des êtres différents*" etc. In this view, Voltaire even sees a guarantee for freedom, since this would reside not in the intellect but in the ability to will and to act.[1560] Such a view was naturally only possible on the basis of Voltaire's fundamental rejection of the Cartesian separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, and therefore it is not surprising that we find it again in a work dedicated to direct polemic against Descartes, namely in Condillac's *Traité des animaux*. *Penser* for Condillac is a multidimensional unity that encompasses "*toutes les modifications de l'âme*." Mind (*entendement*) and willing are only the two most important modifications of the soul, which have a "*origine commune*" and, when separated from one another, can only be

1558 See above, Chapter III, Section 2.
1559 *Ethics* II, Prop. XLIX, Corollary = *Opera*, II, 130.
1560 *Traité de Métaphysique*, Chapter VII = *OC* 220, 217.

"*deux termes abstraits*".[1561] Thus, animals cannot be denied willing, even if only in the form of instinctive striving; and if willing and mind or cognitive faculty are of kindred essence, then animals must be accorded (potential) cognitive ability as well, precisely because they instinctively will. Not that instinct and cognition fully coincide; but they are closely linked, especially since, without cognition (comparison and judgment), the satisfaction of desires would be problematic or purely accidental. Thus, cognition is rooted in instinct, as Condillac states unmistakably: "*L'instinct n'est rien, ou c'est un commencement de connaissance*".[1562]

Nothing could actually have symbolically illustrated the unstoppable tendency toward the interweaving of thinking and willing —resulting from the dethronement of the intellect and the rehabilitation of sensibility—more vividly than its emergence in a treatise on the nature of animals, that is, on the sensuous-biological in its full nakedness and vitality. For the core of this conception lies precisely in pointing out the rooting of cognition or cognitive faculties in the deeper strata of living existence. The interweaving of thinking and willing thus implies—whether consciously recognized or not—a drastic incorporation of the existential into cognition. The demands of a reason that encompassed both thinking and willing could, however, only be supported through the interweaving of Being and Ought—[1563] at least as long as and insofar as one starts from the premise that human existence, insofar as it is directly involved in the act of thinking, is not worthy of the name if it does not originally contain certain norms or at least set them as its highest goal. This is the essence of

1561 II, 10 = *Oeuvres* I, 377 B–378 A; this thesis is already clearly implied in the *Traité des Sensations*, I, 7 § 2 = *Oeuvres* I, 239 B.

1562 *Traité des Animaux* II, 5 = *Oeuvres* I, 362 B.

1563 I have often pointed out the gap between the objective function and the subjective self-understanding of a way of thinking. From this it follows that the existential concept of knowledge, i.e., the intertwining of thinking and willing as a necessary counterpart to the intertwining of being and ought, does not appear only among opponents of intellectualism. It is objectively possible even when someone theoretically accords absolute priority to thinking. In that case, we are dealing with a situation where someone, for polemical reasons, must call their willing "thinking" and direct it against the opponent's openly appearing willing. As I must repeat, similar statements must not be taken at their nominal value.

Enlightenment rationalism: it does not advocate a knowing through pure thought without regard for the consequences of this knowing for values and morality; rather, it represents a commitment to a particular value scale. From this perspective, no one can actually be a "true" rationalist or "truly" reasonable unless he commits himself to the relevant values, regardless of how he proceeds as a thinker. Highest reason, in the eyes of the Enlightenment, was the following of nature—and precisely this following, in light of the new conception of the idea of the Whole based on the rehabilitation of sensibility, was regarded as incompatible with the rule of pure intellect. Thus, cognition and reason stand in the service of a particular (presupposed) value scale, of an ideal beyond all doubt, or of a goal to be achieved at any cost—which, more plainly stated, means: they stand in the service of a fundamental stance, a decision *ultra rationem*. Cognition and reason contain not only the object but also—above all—the subject of cognition, though not merely in the Kantian epistemological sense, as bearers of forms of intuition and categories, but in a far more radical sense: the subject is drawn into cognition along with its entire existential force, and as a source of an irresistible willing. Cognition is therefore an interweaving of object and subject, which takes place under the sign of the subject's domination over the object—specifically, in the form of interpreting the object in the light of the subject's fundamental stance. After the devaluation of the intellect, cognition and truth can come about only with the decisive participation of the other faculties or of the emotional life, in which, according to the existential conception of cognition, the moral need and practical willing are supposed to reside. The cognition of truth is thus considered not least a task of willing and of the corresponding faculties, which should also permeate the intellect and subject it to reason: but reason is now more closely related to the "heart"—in the specific Enlightenment sense—than to pure intellect. Cognition of truth and insight into the nature of morality go hand in hand; Being and Ought are not distinguished. Thus, cognition simultaneously constitutes a moral decision, it has a strong existential dimension, and the whole person participates in it. The thinker's willing and the content of thinking, as well as Ought and Being, flow together.[1564] The concept of reason or rationalism is therefore no

1564 A concrete clarification of this complex against the background of the rehabilitation of sensibility and other typically Enlightenment motifs I have

longer tied to the intellect or spirit elevated above all sensibility, and to certain values, but to existence and to different values, which differ from the former precisely in that they are no longer values of spirit or intellect—that is, they oppose both the unchecked rule of God over nature and the fundamental subjugation of human sensibility to spirit (in the sense of Christian asceticism). The substantive coloring of the rationalism concept already becomes visible in the frequent contrast between faith and reason,[1565] although this contrast at first glance seems to concern only the opposition between autonomy and authority. Given these conditions, any discussion of the concept of reason or rationalism in Enlightenment texts is likely misguided if one does not always inquire about the respective counter-concept. The multitude of counter-concepts and the multitude of fundamental stances that are formally designated by the concept of reason result in its substantive vagueness—a vagueness that paradoxically lies precisely in the general but differently meant effort to bind it to specific contents. Thus, there is no contradiction between the thesis that the concept of reason as such is substantively vague and the thesis that each of its proponents strives to bind it to particular contents; one must simply sharply distinguish between the levels of a time's intellectual reality and our formulation of general judgments about its fundamental concepts. Moreover, the second thesis mentioned above concerns the self-understanding or the subjective claim of the historical actors, who directly or indirectly identify the commitment to reason with the assumption of a substantive position (for example, the following of nature), whereas the first is based on the observation that the instance to which a final substantive clarification of the concept of reason is supposed to refer (for example, nature) itself requires interpretation. Hence the multiplicity of claims to the "true"

attempted using the example of the young Hegel; see *Die Entstehung der Dialektik*, 109 ff. Some formulations here are drawn from that analysis. – The described intertwining of thinking and willing, respectively being and ought, among the normativistically inclined Enlighteners, was admitted by Diderot when he wrote to Vialet: "La passion, mon ami, dans les hommes comme vous et moi, parle souvent le langage de la raison" (End of April–beginning of May 1766, *Corresp.*, VI, 179).

1565 This juxtaposition in a typically Enlightenment form dominates the article *Raison* of the *Encyclopédie*, written by Diderot (= *OC*, XVII, 4 f.). Regarding the same matter in Locke, see the next paragraph.

interpretation of that instance or to the monopoly of interpretation.

Let us now return to Locke to justify in more detail what has been partly anticipated. From Locke's elevation of psychic sensibility, as shown in his analysis of the function of the instinctual *desire*, follows the (essentially dismissive) identification of the intellect with mere discursive thinking,[1566] which is said to be incapable of grasping first principles.[1567] The inadequacies and limits of *reason* in this sense are described at length.[1568]

However, opposite this *reason*, which represents an operation of the mind, stands another, much broader one, which encompasses the totality of faculties ("reason, I mean, our natural faculties")[1569]. In this existential anchoring, it is assigned the task of guiding human behavior according to certain norms; in contrast to discursive reason, it possesses final truths (at least in a normative sense) and is thus suited to the role of "our last judge and guide in everything".[1570] Even though Locke also refers to it as "natural revelation",[1571] the explicitly formulated contrast with divine revelation means not only a solemn announcement of the claim to autonomy but also implies the double thesis: that reason as natural revelation is rooted (unlike the commandments from above) in what is naturally given (thus in "our natural faculties"), and that it must therefore already be a revelation (of the normative aspect) of nature itself because nature, in and through the naturally given, lets its voice be heard. This interpretation is confirmed by the statements in Locke's early treatises on the *lex naturae*, which are essentially taken up, expanded, and slightly modified in the *Essay*. The *lumen naturale* here is identical with *recta ratio*, which is directly understood normatively, as it refers not to theoretical knowledge but to "practica aliqua principia," and is supposed to be rooted in nature itself: as Locke says, it is nothing other than "ipsa lex naturae jam cognita.[1572]" In view of this constitution, it is sharply distinguished from *ratio* in the sense of "facultas animae

1566 *Essay*, I, 1 §§ 6–12 (= I, 42 ff.).
1567 *op. cit.*, I, 1 § 11 (= I, 44 f.).
1568 *op. cit.*, IV, 17 §§ 9–13 (= II, 405 f.).
1569 *op. cit.*, IV, 18 § 3 (= II, 417).
1570 *op. cit.*, IV, 19 § 14 (= II, 438).
1571 *op. cit.*, IV, 19 § 4 (= II, 431).
1572 *Essays on the Law of Nature*, III = p. 148.

discursiva." Now, according to Locke, the possible sources of human knowledge are three: innate ideas, tradition, and the senses. Since the first two are, in Locke's view, inadequate or fictitious, the *lex naturae* must be mediated by the senses, which in this context are supposed to mean the same as *lumen naturale*.[1573] This identification of sense and *lumen naturale* remains conceptually unclear, that is, it is rather suggested than rigorously justified; yet for us, it is interesting as an attempt to bring together a normatively understood nature and human existence in its sensuous rootedness. In the *Essay*, intuition takes over this function instead of the senses, and just like them earlier, it is opposed to the intellectually-abstract as the natural and immediate. The strong dependence of an empiricist's theory of intuition on Descartes need not surprise us: experience and intuitive thinking can be subsumed under the overarching desideratum of immediacy, for rationalism in the sense of existentially intense direct thinking remains a shared position of empiricists and non-empiricists alike in the battle against scholasticism. Just as with Descartes, Locke's praise of intuition is directed against syllogistic reasoning, in which Locke—and indeed the entire Enlightenment—saw the (epistemological) essence of scholasticism.[1574] (The essential difference between Descartes and Locke after the common enemy is dealt with already appears in the fact that for Descartes, unlike Locke, the objects of intuitive thinking can be purely intellectual entities.)[1575] Thus, intuitive knowledge is for Locke "the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of";[1576] proofs are alien to its nature,[1577] and conversely, each step of demonstrative procedure should ideally be accompanied by intuitive certainty.[1578] Intuition must also act normatively, i.e., as *lumen naturale*, because especially those maxims that all humans immediately recognize as true (and these are evidently the natural-law or moral-philosophical ones) do not require the services of the "discursive

1573 *op. cit.*, II = p. 130, 132.
1574 *Essay*, IV, 17, §§ 4–7. Essential statements of Locke about intuition are, significantly, found in the same chapter.
1575 Aaron, *Locke*, 336, 338.
1576 *Essay*, IV, 2 § 1 (= II, 177).
1577 *op. cit.*, IV, 7 § 19 (= II, 290 f.).
1578 *op. cit.*, IV, 2 § 7 (= II, 180 f.).

faculty," but "are known by a superior and higher degree of evidence".[1579]

Already in Locke, then, we find the decisive connection between normative reason and experience, or sensuously rooted existence, where the immediacy of the former is asserted against the intellect. After its dethronement, the intellect (contrary to the Cartesian view) is regarded as necessarily discursive, and on this basis the anti-intellectualist concept of reason flourishes. Over the course of the 18th century, this form of reason gains ground to the extent that the existential concept of knowledge, not least through the contributions of the new aesthetics, becomes more concretely developed, and as the interweaving of thinking and willing becomes ever tighter—beyond Locke's own position but still following his path—as the rehabilitation of sensibility becomes increasingly radical (this development is especially vivid in the fusion of *moral sense* and normative reason, which became so popular during the Enlightenment). It is therefore not surprising that Voltaire, whose thesis about the internal unity of thinking and willing we have mentioned above, describes normative reason very much in line with the existential concept of knowledge as "another kind of instinct".[1580] This very reason is, for Voltaire as already for Locke, identical with the *loi naturelle*, which must therefore possess the same existential immediacy: it "laisse au fond de nos co:urs la regle et la morale"; it is a "source pure".[1581] The existential immediacy of reason reappears when Voltaire, for example, writes that the ideas on which social morality is based "précedent toutes nos reflections".[1582] This living reason—and not any constructions of abstract thought—is what Voltaire sees as the best weapon against "fanaticism," theology, and the church. Of "raison" understood as mere intellect, he says the opposite: that it has harmed both religion and literature.[1583] Thus, in Voltaire as in the broader anti-intellectualist and at the same time normative mainstream of the Enlightenment, statements about reason can be classified—and understood—according to the same dual criterion: On the one hand, reason is the

1579 *op. cit.*, IV, 17 § 14 (= II, 407).
1580 *Dialogues d'outre-tombe* V = *OC*, XXX, 488.
1581 *Poème sur la loi naturelle* II = *OC*, IX, 448 f.
1582 *Essai sur les moeurs*, Introduction, VII = *OC*, XI, 22.
1583 *Pensées, Remarques etc.* = *OC*, XXXI, 119.

existential concept of knowledge in a normative coloring; on the other hand, it coincides with the discursive intellect which, having been epistemologically downgraded to mere discursiveness, is no longer able to ground norms or fundamental worldviews—such that this crucial task must fall instead to the non-intellectual reason, inseparably linked to sensuous, living existence.

If Voltaire, then, rightly placed this form of reason close to instinct, one could go a step further and—assuming a radically optimistic anthropology—regard instinct itself as reason in the normative sense. Of course, the concept of instinct had to be refined or ennobled somewhat for this purpose, but the persistence with which space was made for it reflects the intensity of the effort to unmistakably express the rooting of normative reason within living existence itself. The best-known among those who refined instinct in order to incorporate it into the normative sphere was Rousseau, who called conscience—or reason in the moral-normative sense—an "instinct divin," contrasting its certainty, based not on judgment but on feeling, with the "entendement sans règle" and the (intellectual) "raison sans principe".[1584] Objectively—that is, in terms of intellectual history—this was not a rebellion *against* the Enlightenment, but a result or accompanying phenomenon of an anthropological attitude that itself was only possible on the general intellectual basis of the (normativist and anti-intellectualist) Enlightenment, as I will explain shortly. Moreover, Rousseau's concept of rationalism structurally fits quite naturally into the twofold typical understanding of the Enlightenment's main current, if one does not mistake significant differences of emphasis for structural oppositions: for what is involved are different accentuations of the same underlying structure. When Rousseau says, on the one hand, that mere (i.e., discursive) *raison* is essentially passive and does not bring about anything great,[1585] or that it cannot determine or justify the law of nature, which is grounded in a "besoin naturel au cœur humain," without the help of conscience,[1586]

1584 *Émile* IV = *Oeuvres* IV, 599 ff.

1585 *loc. cit.*, 645.

1586 *loc. cit.*, 523. In light of this passage, Rousseau's statement in the first book of the *Émile* (*Oeuvres*, IV, 288) must also be understood, according to which *raison* alone teaches men good and evil, while conscience can only love or hate them, and therefore cannot properly develop without *raison*. *Raison*

but on the other hand asserts that *raison* provides the correct idea of the deity[1587] or rightly orients us while the heart can deceive,[1588] we are simply seeing the usual double usage of the reason-concept. If we keep clearly in mind that reason-as-intellect cannot assume the role of normative guide, then even in passages like the latter—where *raison* appears directly opposed to the psychic sensibility (instincts, heart)—we should not imagine that an all-dominating higher faculty is being posited; rather, it is a contrast between a random-immediate and a deeper, normatively defined existential need: this deeper need *is* the *raison*, understood as securing the observance of the nature-given norm, or the "rightly understood" fulfillment of existence's needs—not their suppression.[1589] The opposition of *raison-passion* or *cœur* thus corresponds, in other words, to the distinction between "true" and "apparent" nature (whose function we will discuss in the next section), so that the mastery of passions can appear just as much as *nature* (and not as intellect) as the passions themselves.[1590] Thus, to properly assess Rousseau's rationalism, it is not enough simply to say that for Rousseau the boundary between *raison* and *sentiment* is fluid,[1591] especially if one assumes silently a stable, intellectualist understanding of reason throughout. One must add that reason's very nature changes according to its use—that only through its liberation from the intellect does the "good" use of reason become possible.

It would be a mistake to think that this analysis seeks to simply identify the philosophy of feeling à la Rousseau with the other

here has the task of clearly working out something given by nature, not of first bringing the principle of morality into being. Cf. also note 263.

1587 *loc. cit.*, 607.

1588 *Nouvelle Héloïse* III, 20 = *Oeuvres* II, 370.

1589 It is characteristic how the concept of reason is explained in both passages just cited. In the former (see above note 261), it is synonymous with "nature" or the "inner voice," while in the latter (see above note 262), it is intended merely to express the firmness of the normative, not any intellectual instance ("la raison n'a d'autre fin que ce qui est bien"). Cf. also note 260.

1590 See the good analysis by Schinz, *La Pensée de Rousseau*, 231 ff. A weak point in Schinz's presentation is that he differentiates Rousseau's position from that of the *philosophes* too sharply, largely sharing Rousseau's own self-understanding in this matter.

1591 Thus, for example, Burgelin, *Philosophie de l'Existence de Rousseau*, 262, cf. 73.

manifestations of anti-intellectualist Enlightenment thought. Rather, the aim is to locate the undeniable differences exactly where they actually lie. Such a mistaken impression would fundamentally stem only from the conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect—and in any case very widespread—confusion of rationalism with intellectualism. But one should already be warned against this confusion by the simple fact that no one in the 18th century accused Rousseau of irrationalism in the later, pejorative sense, even though many opposed his "hostility to culture" and defended the (relative) rights of discursive thought within culture. Conversely, when the philosophy of feeling attacks what it calls "intellectualism," this is not a sign that intellectualism was actually dominant (otherwise the widespread anti-Cartesianism would be inexplicable), but rather proof that no worse accusation could be imagined in the prevailing zeitgeist than that of intellectualism. The valued *Ratio* stands, in the general understanding of the Enlightenment, much closer to the heart or to willing than to the "cold" intellect—and it could hardly have been otherwise, if *Ratio* = *Nature*. Thus, the success of the philosophy of feeling should not be interpreted as a reaction against an allegedly prevailing intellectualism, but rather proves only the binding of rationalism to certain values that seemed better entrusted to feeling, since its consideration better accommodated the rehabilitation of (psychological) sensibility. The appeal to either thought or feeling is largely polemical in nature—meaning it is always linked to specific substantive positions. Thinking is usually treated more favorably by those who see their primary task in combating nihilism or who do not operate from an unrestricted optimism, whereas the philosophy of feeling, as chiefly represented by Rousseau, is based on a radical anthropological optimism and therefore simply does not take the danger of nihilism seriously, even though it emphatically rejects it. (The optimistic turn of Enlightenment feeling-philosophy indeed constitutes its *differentia specifica* compared to the philosophy of feeling of the 17th century, such as it was outlined by Pascal: Pascal insisted on the Christian-pessimistic image of man, because his main opponent was the hubris of the natural-scientific or Cartesian intellect, whereas Rousseau's philosophy of feeling opposes, among other things, the doctrine of original sin.[1592] The Christian-influenced strand of feeling-

1592 See e.g. *Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont*, in: *Oeuvres* IV, 937 f.

philosophy remained strong even in the 18th century and maintained an ambiguous relationship to Rousseau's, depending on whether its polemical target was the intellect of hubris or the optimistic spirit of the Enlightenment.)[1593]

Reservations against the philosophy of feeling, in one form or another, mainly stemmed from the fear that someone might substitute evil or dangerous feelings for the good innate ones: what other support than the intellect—immune to passions—could morality then have found? The man of La Mettrie was governed by feeling just as much as Rousseau's, yet the practical results in both cases were fundamentally different. Only the shadow of the suspicion of nihilism gave (a nonetheless moderate) intellectualism a certain hearing—but this happened not because of, but *despite* the prevailing tendency, for which rationalism and intellectualism were anything but identical. (This was the reason why even opponents of the philosophy of feeling often conceived of that reason, which was supposed to hold dangerous passions in check, in a way very similar to Rousseau's.) Thus, the dispute between thought and feeling in reality does not concern the priority of one over the other, but only the form and scope of the ontological grounding of values: within the framework of a radically optimistic ontology or anthropology, the whole human being, with all his faculties, becomes the bearer of morality; but the search for a firm foundation of morality solely in thought must urgently appear when one cannot share this ontology or anthropology—or when one draws the more skeptical conclusions that lie close at hand from the rehabilitation of sensibility. The subordinate character of the conflict between thought and feeling also becomes clear if we consider another aspect of it. It is always conducted—by both sides—in the name of the same moral values (thus it would be completely misleading to assume that from the primacy of feeling necessarily follows *these* values, and from the primacy of thinking *those* values: the values are already given with the basic disposition, which as such does not even recognize separations like that between thought and feeling, while the appeal to thought or feeling serves polemical purposes when it comes to the question of the justification of the values). Thus, someone who asserts the primacy of feeling on the basis of an optimistic anthropology stands closer, in terms of worldview, to someone who shares the same

1593 See below, Chapter VIII, Section 3a.

values but not the radical anthropological optimism, than to someone who asserts the primacy of feeling based on a pessimistic anthropology —and thus at least flirts with nihilism. In terms of the moral-Enlightenment basic attitude, Rousseau is therefore much closer to Kant than, say, to Sade. This constellation only becomes truly understandable if we regard each philosophical position that aims to answer ultimate questions as a rationalization of a basic disposition, formed with a view to a concrete opponent. Then, the traditional opposition of rationalism and irrationalism largely becomes irrelevant —as we outlined at the beginning of this work.

We had to once again anticipate the discussion of Enlightenment moral philosophy in order to clarify the concept of rationalism. This necessity, however, arose only because of the often-emphasized connection of each concept of rationalism to specific substantive positions. Even the very possibility of an anti-intellectualistic concept of rationalism rests on a substantive position—namely, the rehabilitation of sensibility. Now we can understand why Rousseau must not be regarded as a prophet or forerunner of a supposed uprising against a supposed Enlightenment intellectualism. If this view once had many supporters, it was only because the aforementioned essential feature of the Enlightenment as such was overlooked, and Rousseau's attacks on the rule of the intellect were interpreted as attacks on the Enlightenment itself. But intellectualism was mainly a phenomenon *before* the Enlightenment—and it was against this that the Enlightenment in its main current, not only Rousseau, turned—quite independently of whether Rousseau, for understandable reasons, denounced his contemporary opponents as continuators of the old bad intellectualism, often merely varying arguments that these opponents themselves had previously raised against scholastic syllogism or mathematics. It is, in fact, difficult to see against what Enlightenment intellectualism a thinker as influential as Shaftesbury, for example, would have rebelled even before 1700. What has been called the "sentimental revolution" began simultaneously[1594] with those intellectual phenomena that specifically characterize the Enlightenment (notably its turning away from Cartesianism,

1594 After the book of the same name by Atkinson, which contains a wealth of good evidence from French authors around 1700. Cf. his posthumous work *Prelude to Enlightenment*, especially 25 ff., 44 ff.

symbolized by Newton and Locke) and is substantively connected to the powerful rise of empiricist and genetic epistemology. Thus, "reason" and "feeling" are clearly unsuitable as criteria for periodization. It should also be noted that "feeling" does not necessarily or always serve as a harbinger of "Romanticism" either—although this has often tempted people to set its origins as close to the beginning of the Romantic movement as possible.[1595] Conversely, it follows that the Enlightenment must not be viewed from the perspective of the Romantics, as was often the case for a long time. The Romantics clung to the concept of reason, which indeed characterizes the Enlightenment (especially as a counterconcept to faith), and exploited its ambiguity (particularly evident in terms like *reason* or *raison*), equating it polemically with intellect in order to once again pit the heart against it—but now with a substantially new content. Geisteshistorisch, however, they were only able to do this so easily because the anti-intellectualistic mainstream of the Enlightenment had already discovered the heart in its connection with ("true") reason.

Moreover, those who wanted to see in Rousseau the leader of a sentimental uprising against the dominant Enlightenment current overlooked the fact that the Enlightenment was still in the process of becoming—that many of its characteristic works had not even appeared yet when Rousseau suddenly burst onto the intellectual scene. It is thus already methodologically incorrect to oppose Rousseau to the abstraction "Enlightenment": Rousseau is an organic part of the Enlightenment, *precisely as Enlightenment*. Even substantively, his philosophy of religion and morals rests on commonplaces of Enlightenment thought.[1596] What gives him his

1595 See the good essay by Monier, *Unité ou scission*, especially 1210 f., 1219 f.

1596 Moreover, Rousseau's philosophy of religion and morality is marked by that dualism of wavering which is typical of the main current of the Enlightenment (see my analysis in *Die Entstehung der Dialektik*, 118 ff., in connection with Chapter VI, Sections 2 and 3 of this work). Schinz rightly rejected the thesis of the mystical character of Rousseau's philosophy of religion, seeing it as an early Romantic construction (*La Pensée de Rousseau*, 485 ff.). Vernière also notes that Rousseau's natural religion "ne se distingue pas du déisme contemporain par son contenu intellectuel" (*Spinoza et la pensée française*, 489). Rousseau's personal relationships with other Enlighteners form a chapter of their own and must not directly or indirectly influence the history-of-ideas conceptual analysis. Rousseau's monomanias and ungovernable

peculiar position is his radicalization or dramatization of an equation that he did not invent, but which had become indispensable in the 18th century: *Nature = Reason*, with the decisive emphasis placed on the concept of Nature. Everything ("truly") natural is thus deemed rational. Rousseau does not fight against *ratio*; rather, he only deepens its existential content further. Insofar as it remains the guiding instance, it merely represents pure nature, which is to restore the corrupted nature to its original state. Once nature and reason are linked so tightly, it becomes natural to view reason and instinct as essentially similar or equally valid forms of the same genus, "Nature"—where reason need not feel debased, because from the outset it is suffused with instinct and will: engaged, polemical, and, since it also advocates an anti-ascetic morality argumentatively, it must even welcome the rehabilitation of (psychic etc.) sensibility. In this way, Rousseau's work powerfully boosted anti-ascetic morality, and was all the more effective because the pure drives were portrayed—not in the spirit of the pessimists, but in their noblest and most endearing form, framed within a radically optimistic anthropology.[1597] Thus it

temperament blended with the culturally rationalized aversion to the circle of philosophers, and this combination (in which the ideological component played a secondary role) made the break unavoidable. Characteristically, Rousseau continued to be seen by the uninformed public as belonging to the *philosophes*. Voltaire unintentionally captured the objective situation when he humorously distinguished between Rousseau's basically plausible philosophy and his person: "c'est bien dommage qu'il ait fait le Vicaire savoyard. La conversation de ce vicaire méritait d'être écrite par un honnête homme," he wrote to Comte d'Argental on October 2, 1765 (*Oeuvres* XLIV, 77). Rousseau's attacks against the *philosophes* could never be forgiven, as they struck at the heart of the elite self-consciousness of the *philosophes* themselves (see for example Voltaire's letter to Damilaville from June 14, 1762 = *Oeuvres* XLII, 136) and not rarely amounted to open sabotage of their activities (see the piquant story of Voltaire's theater in Geneva and Rousseau's alliance with religious fanatics to sabotage the theater, Voltaire to d'Alembert, letter of April 20, 1761 = *Oeuvres* XLI, 271 f.).

1597 That morality and passions do not necessarily contradict each other was, for broad circles of the public, a particular advantage of Rousseau's moral philosophy; see Attridge, *The Reception of La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 255 ff. Attridge describes Rousseau's success with the general public in contrast to the reserve or rejection by the *philosophes* (231 ff., 250 ff.), as well as the popularizing effect of Rousseau's writings. Cf. the concise but pointed remarks of Barrière, *Vie*

seemed possible to satisfy human nature without having to betray decency and morality. Rousseau theoretically fulfilled this double need of 18th-century bourgeois sentimentalism—[1598] and that was one major reason for his popularity. A second reason was that he popularized the essence of Enlightenment rationalism itself. What the wider public perceived as Rousseau's struggle against the "cold" intellect was, above all, the popular or novelistic character of most of his widely-read writings. Now the natural ideal spoke in a natural manner, without recourse to philosophical-scientific techniques—techniques that appeared as the crafty products of the enemy of nature and heart, namely the intellect, and were therefore regarded with suspicion. Rousseau made morality and freedom livelier—that is, more sentimentally persuasive and more accessible—by presenting them not as precarious products of the painful self-overcoming of an evil man, but as an anthropological attribute. It is characteristic of Enlightenment rationalism that it had to cloak itself in an apparently anti-rationalistic garb to express its ultimate implications with dazzling clarity. The truly "irrational" element in Rousseau was only the directness and simplicity of his language. By viewing the more complicated logical demonstrations as merely new manifestations of the old intellectualist sin—just like his audience—he became the first to commit the error later repeated by many historians of the Enlightenment: he confused the form that Enlightenment rationalism sometimes assumed with its substantive intention. From that perspective, he could naturally accuse his own century of intellectualism—but the accusation was only effective because that century itself understood "intellectualism" as an accusation, i.e., because Rousseau misunderstood the spirit of his own age. The magnitude of this confusion—between form and content, or the belief that opting for thinking or feeling necessarily had binding consequences for one's method or moral conclusions—is revealed negatively but clearly by Rousseau himself: his passionate rejection of

intellectuelle en France, 351. Of course, in this context, only the effect of Rousseau's philosophy of religion and especially of morality is meant. His political philosophy, which moreover contains much more original aspects, only begins to have an impact after 1789 and hardly affects his relationship to the actual Enlightenment period. See also MacNeil, *The Cult of Rousseau*, especially 197, 201 (on the quasi-religious character of the Rousseau cult, 199).

1598 See below, Chapter VI, Section 3 and my remarks on the sociological character of Jacobi's novels, in *Die Entstehung der Dialektik*, 138.

intellectualism did not prevent him, just like most Enlightenment thinkers, from putting into the service of his own cause a method that, in general Enlightenment thought, was considered the unforgivable philosophical crime of "scholasticism"—namely, deduction. The sentence, "Commençons clone par ecarter tous les faits; car ils ne touchent point a la question,[1599]" placed programmatically at the start of the *Second Discourse*, is not a *lapsus calami* but expresses the deeper mechanism of Rousseau's thought. In reality, what is happening is deduction, despite all his ridicule of the opponent's abstract syllogism. The highest (onto)logical principle stands firm and is originally defined with regard to certain values. The task now is to come to know its structure more closely.

4. The Structure of the Normativist Concept of Nature

The interweaving of thinking and willing within the existential concept of knowledge represented only one aspect of the broader tendency toward softening or abolishing traditional dualisms. Intellect and psychic sensibility were intertwined in the new psychological theory of knowledge to the same extent and in the same manner as soul and body in anthropology, or God and world, movement and matter, in cosmology. The same process unfolded simultaneously on several levels because a single overarching worldview was at work. The particular conceptual form each level took is essentially just one aspect of a Denkkomplex (complex of thought) that, at least in its ideal-typical reconstruction, is internally coherent—so that each level, formally and structurally, appears as a scaled-up or scaled-down version of the others. It is no accident that the new empiricist epistemology, for example, emerged at the same time as the new idea of the Whole, or of Nature. It would therefore be hermeneutically naïve to take the polemical turning away from Being (in the sense of traditional metaphysics), or the foregrounding of the (knowing) subject and epistemology, at face value—and to conclude that the new

1599 Oeuvres 111, 132.

epistemological positions were conceivable as pure method, without specific ontological assumptions or under any arbitrary historical conditions. As we have seen, even committed and, as far as possible, consistent phenomenalists like d'Alembert and Condillac could not manage without a more or less explicit (at any rate, a very general and empirically scarcely verifiable) conception of Being in the new sense—that is, a conception of Nature. In fact, the central role of the concept of Nature—whereby even "Nature" meant more than just the object of natural science—can hardly be understood if we simply take the positivist-phenomenalist self-description of some (without doubt prominent) Enlightenment thinkers as the thinking style of the Enlightenment *as such*.[1600] And we are even less capable of satisfactorily explaining or understanding the strongly normative component in the thought of most Enlightenment figures if we overlook the ontological background of their thinking. Attributes of Nature such as harmony and lawfulness—which, even in the eyes of the most influential scientists, were not meant to express merely Nature's phenomenal aspect but its *essence*—corresponded, in the world of ideas of the normativist Enlightenment, to the idea of binding, because nature-conforming, obligations (*Sollen*). Because Nature was the broadest of those levels we just spoke about—because it contained all others, so to speak, as its own scaled-down versions—those other levels had to become saturated with the normative essence of Nature as well. We already saw this in the case of the existential concept of knowledge, which really only expressed the epistemological implications of the broader, worldview-driven interweaving of Being and Obligation. Just as thinking and willing were fused within the existential concept of knowledge, so too were Being and Obligation fused within the concept of Nature. Both concepts arose from the rehabilitation of sensibility, though at different levels. And just as the concept of Nature indicated the normative presence of Obligation within Being, the existential concept of knowledge pointed to the

1600 That is the reason why Cassirer, for example, hardly addresses the Enlightenment concept of nature in its multidimensionality (which also includes the ontological dimension) directly. Even in the first chapter of his *Philosophie der Aufklärung* ("Nature and Knowledge of Nature in the Thought of Enlightenment Philosophy"), he speaks more of natural science as method rather than of the conception of nature as content.

normative presence of willing within thinking—by which thinking was inevitably led not merely to morally accept the Obligation set by willing, but to ontologically justify it.

As a polemical concept, Nature was directed against the supernatural. This was already the case in the 17th century, although the rehabilitation of sensuality at that time was primarily meant in a scientific sense, i.e., consisted in the consideration of Nature as a worthy object of intellectual endeavor, and therefore resulted in an intellectualism that could very well be reconciled ontologically with the idea of Creation. Nevertheless, the activity of the Creator was bound to certain rules derived from the study of Nature: the Natural thereby became indirectly the standard for the supernatural. The supernatural remained independently alongside Nature, but it was increasingly denied the right to change the existing natural laws at will from time to time (this was accepted even by those who claimed that God could have created entirely different natural laws). After the gradual establishment of the thesis of the immanence of movement in matter and through the ontological elevation of sensuality, the idea of Creation is gradually (and again despite the honest subjective religiosity of many thinkers) pushed aside. The polemical opposition between Nature and the supernatural intensifies until finally Nature tolerates no supernatural beside itself: "The concept of Nature is expanded through the opposition to the supernatural in such a way that, where the idea of the supernatural falls under the critical verdict of the Enlightenment, it becomes the concept for the totality of Being, since it now has no counterpart at all".[1601] The supernatural in the old sense is indeed defeated, but at the same time, the Natural becomes the new deity. I have explained elsewhere that a victorious worldview must take over certain life-sustaining functions of the defeated one if it is to replace it successfully in the long run.[1602] The formal structure of the victorious position must therefore display those features of the defeated or opposing position that enabled the latter to fulfill its life-sustaining functions. Above all, it must be able to ground a morality through ontological statements, especially since every new worldview enters the field with elevated moral claims. Moreover, the concept of

1601 Thus Spaemann in his brilliant essay, *Genetisches zum Naturbegriff des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 66.

1602 See above, Chapter II, Section 1.

Nature was not only directed against the supernatural God but also against all forms of rule that invoked him, and thus also against the morality they represented; in this respect, Nature meant the opposite of asceticism. How, then, had the concept of Nature to be constituted in order to satisfactorily replace God not only as Creator but also as moral lawgiver? And, apart from the content of morality or the value scale, what was the formal-conceptual structure that in the old worldview enabled the establishment of a morality or value scale at all, and that the new position had to adopt in order to logically allow for a morality or value scale within it?

The fundamental characteristic of the traditional concept of God is the fusion of ontological and normative principles within him. God is Being par excellence or pure Being,[1603] and at the same time, as moral lawgiver, he not only establishes a value scale but also embodies it; he is the epitome of all norms. This was intended to remove from the norms organically connected to God any character of arbitrariness or contingency (let us recall the Church's fight against Ockham's voluntarism, which was by no means understood as a pious praise of God's omnipotence), so that their observance had to appear all the more binding — which at the same time strengthened the position of those who could successfully claim the monopoly on interpreting the divine norms. If the "ought" is not merely a command, not merely a setting of a will that might be suspected of instability or subjectivity, but is in fact identical with Being itself, then it becomes just as absolute as Being itself — it ceases to be a perhaps unattainable or even fictitious goal and becomes, rather, the precondition ("true," "worthy," etc.) of human existence. This schema indeed states the reason why norms must be followed, but it does not explain why this world, which supposedly grounds itself in God as Being-Ought, daily witnesses so many transgressions of the ought. The "causality of suffering" (Nietzsche) must thus be explained through an additional construction. Since the firm connection of Being and Ought, for the sake of the ultimate foundation of values, must remain unchallenged on the level of "true" Being, that level on which the transgressions of the Ought occur must by no means be identified with "true" Being; it necessarily constitutes the realm of semblance. In other words: Being and

1603 On Augustine's and Thomas' concept of God in this sense, see Gilson, *Thomisme*, 100 ff., 108 ff.

semblance must be opposed because Being can never be faulty: all inconsistencies in the world are attributed to semblance, while "true" Being remains intact as the source of truth, morality, and hope. The norm is derived from or identified with this "true" Being and thus made objectively binding; only the dark forces of semblance are held responsible for its transgression. But God would not be what follows from his definition as Being-Ought if he did not firmly control these forces. The fact that they exist, then, can only lie in an intention or plan of God, and thus the transgression of the Ought must ultimately serve this plan. Here the idea is developed of a complex Whole, standing under the sign of Being-Ought, within which that which appears to contradict its — dictated by the nature of Being-Ought — meaning (sin, suffering, evil) ultimately confirms this meaning and helps bring it about. This conclusion rests on two premises: the identity of Being and Ought on the level of "true" Being, and the distinction between Being and semblance once one leaves that level. The distinction between Being and semblance is actually only the reverse side of the identity of Being and Ought and aims to make comprehensible the (very) deficient presence of that identity *hic et nunc*, that is, the causality of suffering. The unity of Being and Ought and the separation of Being and semblance form the two fundamental levels from which the idea of the Whole is constituted, which in turn serves to answer ultimate questions and thus to immunize the entire construction against polemic.

In my view, essential formal aspects of this structure of thought can be recognized in the normativistic concept of nature. Precisely because this was the case, it was able to form the axis of a new worldview position. Nature is Being and Ought in one, so that the binding force of its normative rule is ontologically secured and thereby achieves a *non plus ultra*. The demonstration of this binding force was all the more urgent because, after the weakening or factual elimination of the idea of God and the corresponding elevation of anthropology, the danger of relativism grew for obvious reasons. The elimination of the suspicion of nihilism demanded a normatively colored ontology in one form or another, in order to banish the specter of morality as mere positing, or of Hobbesian decisionism, and beyond that, now with an offensive intention, to give one's own fundamental attitude the desired, polemically effective ontological foundation, that is, to make from

one's own Ought, which in the form of a subjective credo cannot claim general binding force, an irrefutable Being. The law of nature — made immediately evident by the existential mode of cognition or through "natural revelation" (Locke) — is supposed to possess the same binding force both in a scientific and in a normative respect; not coincidentally, the interweaving of Being and Ought in the concept of nature corresponds to the interweaving of the two concepts of law.[1604] This unification of the levels now makes nature into that Whole which cannot be dispensed with if a worldview position is to be made polemically convincing, that is, if ultimate questions are to be answered in the sense of an intelligible causality of suffering. The idea of the Whole served to incorporate all those moments that seemed to contradict the new fundamental attitude into a comprehensive framework and then to interpret them by appealing to the meaning of the Whole in such a way that they could no longer be presented as objections, but rather as confirmations of this fundamental attitude. Only with regard to the idea of the harmonious Whole could Shaftesbury claim that there was no "real Ill",[1605] even if it appeared otherwise (the structural identity of theological and Enlightenment positions at this critical point is shown precisely in the fact that the thesis that all is good was affirmed and denied by both sides, each in a different constellation).[1606] The idea of the Whole, which is supposed to be established according to a plan or to stand under the sign of a norm, thus made possible the distinction between "Being" and "semblance," which was adopted from the old metaphysics and transferred to the new central concepts. Regarding the normative component of the concept of nature, Being and semblance could again be distinguished from one another because within the concept of nature itself Being and Ought were identical. Thus, the Being of nature, or nature as Being, lies deeper than the superficial multiplicity (that is, everything that contradicts nature as norm) and therefore possesses the power of evidence that can be refuted by no experience. Only the assumption that nature indeed has a deeper dimension than mere natural phenomena explains, moreover, the bitter complaints that man and society had estranged themselves from nature, mistreated nature,

1604 On this correspondence Bredvold, *Brave New World*, 3 ff.
1605 *Characteristicks*, II, 274.
1606 See below, Chapter VI, Section 5.

etc. — complaints that would be entirely senseless if nature and opinion, Being and seeming, had been fully identified. Such an identification, moreover, would not only have obscured the new causality of suffering (suffering as an effect of separation from nature as Being-Ought, that is, as an effect of dwelling in the realm of the "unnatural" or of semblance), but also blocked the path to claiming demands in the form of the "only correct" interpretation of the meaning of nature — an interpretation that must necessarily lead to a substantive definition of life according to nature, and thus to a concrete moral code, implicitly containing specific relations of rule. It is in this double perspective that, for example, Rousseau's demand is to be understood, that one should exclude from the concept of nature and specifically from the concept of human nature all that is relative and fluctuating, or anything that refers to place and time. A distinction must be made between "ce qui fait les varietes de ce qui est essential a l'espece." Only against this conceptual background may he appear "qui ose assigner des bornes precises a la nature, et dire: voila jusqu' ou l'homme peut aller, et pas au dela".[1607]

This is, by and large, the general formal structure shared by both opponents, whose content, however, varies depending on the polemical determination of Being and seeming. If, in the thought-world of the opponent, as seen from the perspective of the Enlighteners, seeming and nature or sensuality, as well as Being and spirit or God, belong together, then the radical rehabilitation of sensuality means its solemn inclusion into Being itself and thus — since values are to be found in Being — not only its elevation as a value but beyond that a fusion of all values with the sensual world, which in the eyes of the opponent held the status of seeming. This is the core and highest satisfaction in polemics: to ennoble the seeming of the opponent into one's own Being and thus to debase his Being. The concept of nature fulfilled this task, and in addition, it was able to fully

1607 *Nouvelle Héloïse*, Second Preface = *Oeuvres* II, 12. The distinction between being and appearance in nature, incidentally, is made not only in areas with direct moral-philosophical implications, especially as it characterizes the style of thinking of the normative Enlightenment as a whole. It is also asserted in aesthetics. Thus, for example, La Motte writes that nature is not any random object, but only one that has "caractères dignes d'attention." When we therefore say that nature is worthy of imitation for the artist, we must understand by nature "une nature choisie" (*Réflexions*, 226 f.).

accommodate the polemically important anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality. It did not relate to the at least potentially acosmic intellect, but to the pulsating life, the colorful environment on the one hand, and to man in his full concreteness on the other. Now, if the concept of nature as bearer of the formal features of worldview positions in general maintains the separation between Being and seeming in order to bind Being and Ought all the more firmly together and in order not to let the splendor of Being or of the still unrealized, yet rooted in Being itself, norm be clouded by the deficiencies of seeming, it nevertheless does the exact opposite in its role as a concrete polemical concept, that is, with regard to the opponent's conception of Being and seeming: it entangles Being and seeming, insofar as spirit is regarded as Being and sensuality as seeming. These two aspects must not be confused on the level of analysis, that is, it must not be asserted that the interweaving of sensuality and spirit and the mitigation or abolition of transcendence in this sense would also abolish transcendence in the sense of the separation between Being and seeming. For this transcendence is based on the worldview-necessary interweaving of Being and Ought as such, without regard to the content of Being, whereas the abolition of the transcendence of spirit or of the opponent's Being refers to the polemically defined content of Being (and of the Ought intertwined with it). This constellation makes it possible for transcendence (in the sense of the separation of Being and seeming as the reverse side of the interweaving of Being and Ought) to continue to live unscathed precisely within that worldview that emerged after the abolition of transcendence (in the sense of the old supernatural). This, in my opinion, is the structural core of secularization in general, which alone makes the secularization of individual theological concepts possible. From the standpoint of the radical rehabilitation of sensuality, all this can be summarized as follows: Norm and sensuality no longer contradict each other after the transcendence of spirit has been abolished. Nature is norm, not because it is no sensuality, but precisely because it is (also) sensuality. For after the rehabilitation of sensuality, Being and seeming are defined differently than by the opponent — despite the adoption of the general worldview schema, which enables or requires the interweaving of Being and Ought as such.

The quintessence of nature is now seen in this interweaving.

The meaning of nature is simple and self-evident, if only one is willing to accept the associated values without reservation. The simplicity of nature forms a constant motif in Enlightenment literature, which has a concrete ideological function: if nature is simple, i.e., recognizable as essence in all its forms, then the normative element associated with it must be present and self-evident at every moment and in every situation; no one has the right to disregard the instructions of nature, because there is also no one who has never heard its voice. The simplicity is understood in a double sense. In an ontological sense, it refers to the transparency and steadfastness of natural laws, and in this, it is connected to the general monistic tendency, that is, it logically supports the thesis that a single archetype underlies all products of nature, whose metamorphoses produce the diversity of phenomena. On the other hand, it means a turn toward existential immediacy: one should not first split one's own self in its relation to the environment and then, on syllogistic detours, discover and cultivate its better part, but should directly grasp the unified essence of this self in its psychic and physical concreteness, whereby conceptual grasp and existential unfolding seem to coincide. Now, if the norm lies in Being, i.e., in nature, then from this double simplicity emerge direct normative instructions of a metaphysical and moral character. A religion, for example, that is supposed to help the soul ascend to true Being, must not, against its simplicity, get lost in pedantic and incomprehensible dogmas, which obviously no longer serve the natural God but a particular unnatural authority, while a morality that does not want to contradict existential immediacy must eliminate asceticism, and thus the splitting of man that thwarts the discovery of his own essence and thereby offers welcome support to heteronomy. These implications clarify the direct polemical-emancipatory function of the concept of nature, as it asserts itself by invoking the evidence of immediacy — whereby the immediacy (i.e., highest persuasive force) of one's own norms and immediacy as a norm are most closely connected.

Nature is thus Being and Ought, reality and norm in one, and at the same time embodies the interweaving of spirit and sensuality. It is immanence and immediacy, yet remains at the same time transcendence, since Being and Ought are one within it, but the Ought is obviously not yet realized. It therefore does not coincide with mere being, which deviates strongly from the norm, since it possesses a

nobler dimension and an elevated meaning. Shaftesbury grasped this normative meaning instinctively when he reproached Hobbes for speaking "so much of Nature with so little meaning"[1608] Goethe once wrote: "When artists speak of nature, they always subintelligere the Idea, without becoming clearly aware of it".[1609] Exactly the same was done by most Enlightenment thinkers — and quite consciously, as long as they used the concept of nature polemically. Unconscious to them remained only that they were ontologizing their own norms in order to come into possession of their dearest weapon, in doing so adopting the same formal framework of thought as their opponents. This had to be so, for a worldview can only be fought with means drawn from the sphere of worldviews. The concept of nature had therefore to be unconsciously and negatively oriented on the great and time-tested model of the theological opponent. In the thought-world of the eighteenth century, it thus became a "mythologie plutôt que simple idéologie".[1610] Its mythological-ideological power lay primarily in its logical ambiguity or plasticity, by virtue of which it seemed to unite within itself the two worlds, i.e., Being and Ought on the one hand, and spirit and sensuality on the other. But it was also the case that the ideological struggle in which this concept of nature arose had long since—at least since Hobbes—turned from a war against "scholasticism" largely into a civil war between its opponents. The concept of nature supplied weapons to all fronts. Catholic theologians mixed the empirical and normative concept of nature just as freely—and purpose-rationally—as the Enlightenment thinkers.[1611] And since it often happens in intellectual history that even the original opponents of a concept, after its breakthrough, nolentes volentes deploy it, endeavoring to reinterpret it in their sense and to defend their original position with more modern weapons, it came to pass that political conservatives too made use of the concept of nature as a legitimating

1608 *Characteristicks*, I, 110.

1609 *Maximen und Reflexionen*, No. 750 = p. 125.

1610 Ehrard, *Idée de Nature*, 248.

1611 Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers*, 208. Palmer sees the difference between theologians and *philosophes* regarding the use of the concept of nature only in that the former tend to emphasize its normative aspect, while the latter tend to emphasize its empirical aspect—or so they claim. The mixture of both aspects, however, remains common.

instance.[1612] This manifold usage with manifold intentions caused the popularity of the concept of nature to grow to the point of indispensability, but at the same time made its ambiguity unavoidable. Its heterogeneous components were combined, depending on fundamental attitude or opponent, in varying proportions and constellations, whereby one "anti-scholastic" party asserted the same formal principles as the other, only to all the more easily accuse them of betrayal of the common cause. The concept of nature thus mirrored the process of dissolution of modern rationalism into irreconcilable opposing positions,[1613] and its structure enabled it just as much to combat "scholasticism"; "the multiplicity of its meanings has made it easy, and common, to slip more or less insensibly from one connotation to another, and thus in the end to pass from one ethical or aesthetic standard to its very antithesis, while nominally professing the same principles".[1614] All this, however, was at least no secret to the most astute contemporaries. Already at an early point, the treatise known to us, Boyle's *De ipsa natura* (published in 1686), had sharpened awareness of the ambiguity of the concept of nature, although it actually referred only to the scholastic-Aristotelian one. Bayle at the time received Boyle's statements very positively,[1615] only to write nearly twenty years later, this time in the light of his own experiences, the words: "Il n'y a guère de mots dont on se serve d'une manière plus vague, que celui de Nature. Il entre dans toutes sortes de discours tantôt en un sens, tantôt en un autre, et l'on ne s'attache presque jamais à une idée précise".[1616] In retrospect on the whole Enlightenment, Condorcet had to judge with equal sharpness: "Le mot de nature est un des ces mots dont on se sert d'autant plus souvent, que ceux qui les entendent ou les prononcent y attachent plus rarement une idée précise".[1617] And Johnson's *Rasselas* had made similar reflections in the

1612 Willey, *Eighteenth Century Background*, 196 ff., 228 ff.

1613 See below, Chapter VII, Sections 1 and 3 on the concept of nature among the nihilists.

1614 Lovejoy, *Nature as aesthetic norm*, in: *Essays*, 69.

1615 *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, Dec. 1686, Art. III = *Oeuvres Diverses*, I, 705 ff.

1616 *Réponse aux questions d'un provincial*, II, Chapter CV = *Oeuvres Diverses*, III, 713.

1617 *Éloge de M. Tronchin*, *Oeuvres*, II, 507.

midst of the Enlightenment's heyday.[1618]

The contentual vagueness of the concept of nature did not, of course, arise only in the age of the Enlightenment, but during the entire two preceding millennia, in which the concept of nature had to assume various normative tasks,[1619] whereby it entered into such a close connection with the idea of the normative altogether that one may confidently assert that, in purely logical terms, its vagueness stems from the inherent vagueness of the normative itself. Its longevity, in turn, could be attributed to the ever-present desire to justify the normative by ultimate arguments or by an ontology, namely to turn the ought into a being and then to derive the absolute binding force of the ought from the being thus constructed. The survival, indeed the new vitality of the normativistic concept of nature in the age of the Enlightenment speaks eloquently in itself to the unbroken power, that is, the formal permanence of worldview structures despite different contents and labels conditioned by the respective polemical constellation. Following the Stoicism-inspired "natural system" of the 16th and 17th centuries, the Enlightenment adopted the motto ὁμολογουμὲνως τῇ φύσει ξῇ as its own. Since the concept of nature[1620] only in its Stoic elaboration became structurally mature enough to attain that normative status which, not least in Christian versions, remained authoritative thereafter, it is worthwhile, historically and logically, to consider more closely the implications and presuppositions of that motto. In it appears the interweaving of being and ought in the form of an interweaving of freedom and necessity. If

1618 Rasselas wishes to know what it means to live according to nature, whereupon the philosopher he questions answers: "To live according to Nature is to act always with due regard to the fitness arising from the relations and qualities of causes and effects; to concur with the great and unchangeable scheme of universal felicity etc." Rasselas "soon found that this was one of the sages whom he should understand less as he heard him longer" (Chapter XXII, p. 60).

1619 This happened primarily in the form of natural law. On the dependency of natural law on the respective content of the concept of nature, see Wolf, *Problem der Naturrechtslehre*, 21 ff., who lists nine basic meanings of the latter.

1620 The emphasis on the concept of nature through the sophistic opposition of *νόμος* and *φύσις* does not yet make nature into a fixed normative instance, since it rather implies that norms are products of *νόμος*, while nature itself behaves indifferently or amorally. See Heinimann, *Nomos und Physis*, 47 ff.

nature is being and ought in one, then acting according to the ought must be acting according to the constitution of nature, in which, however—for the sake of the firmness of the ought—blind chance must not prevail. On the other hand, it is precisely this acting according to the necessary constitution of nature that guarantees the attainment of "true" freedom. Thus, the binding to necessity becomes the foundation of freedom—but under two conditions: that the normative belongs to the essence of the necessary, and that freedom is not regarded as the satisfaction of desires at will, but as the fulfillment of certain norms. The *recta ratio* is thus under the law of conformity with nature, which itself could hardly be realized if nature were not subject to a law that must itself be essentially identical with the *recta ratio*.[1621] If man lives virtuously = freely, he follows his own and at the same time the cosmic nature, of which he is a part, whereby the normative sense of the universe is also innate to him. Thus, morality in the Stoics is part of an ontology, but the entire ontology itself stands under the sign of morality, for the sake of which even Stoic logic, psychology, and physics were constructed.[1622] The same structure, namely the ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν in the sense of the interweaving of freedom and necessity, is typically formulated in Enlightenment fashion in *Emile*. "Hommes, soyez humains," Rousseau exclaims, and interprets his exhortation to mean that man can only be virtuous = free if he succeeds in "à mettre en égalité parfaite la puissance et la volonté." He must therefore know in what his human capacity or essence consists, so that he can direct his will and his conduct according to it: "L'homme vraiment libre ne veut que ce qu'il peut." Freedom is thus *eo ipso* conscious binding to the lawfulness of nature; the certainty of achieving morality thereby results from the immanence of the norm in nature itself ("C'est ... la nature qui fait tout pour le mieux ..."). To scorn the measure of nature is not a means of gaining more freedom, but the surest path to enslavement; one becomes the slave of one's own "imagination," chasing after all kinds of "chimères"

1621 This can be seen, for example, by combining two fundamental formulations of Cicero. One (De republica III, 22 § 33) reads: "vera lex recta ratio naturae congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna." The other (De legibus I, 6 § 18) says: "Lex est ratio summa insita in natura ... Eadem ratio quom est in hominis mente confirmata et confecta lex est."
1622 Hicks, *Stoic and Epicurean*, 74.

(presumably an allusion here to the Stoic δόξα): for the sole measure of all reality is nature.[1623] The entire construction aims at making the interweaving of being and ought so tight that the binding force of the latter, identical with freedom, must result *eo ipso* from the necessity of the former. It would then suffice to be wholly and fully, in order to be moral = free.

The Enlightenment generally interprets the ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν differently than the ancient Stoics or the Neostoics of the 16th and 17th centuries did. In the measure that the rehabilitation of sensuality becomes more radical, one distances oneself explicitly or implicitly from those ascetic features of Stoicism that in earlier times seemed to forge a bridge between it and Christian morality.[1624] This again relates to the profound transformation of the concept of nature. That nature to which, for example, Christian natural law referred was more a construct of thought than a tangible reality that could somehow be connected with the notion of nature as an autonomous, dynamic whole.[1625] Before the rehabilitation of sensuality in the modern double sense,[1626] nature or immanence, due to its ontological inferiority, had to appear opaque and irrational. In itself, it could therefore not easily be thought together with the normative; rather, it stood apart from, if not opposed to it; *gratia* was placed higher than *natura*, even if the two could occasionally encounter each other in their effects. Under these conditions, when speaking of nature in a normative sense, one fundamentally meant an ensemble of norms distilled from God's character and projected onto a fictive-ideal level located somewhere between God and sensual creation, in order to gain humanly comprehensible dimensions and thus direct practical relevance.This spectral, God-referenced concept of nature dies out after the emergence of the new idea of the whole. The new concept of nature is, to be sure, just as much a construction as the old, and as such displays the formal features of normativistic constructions generally described.

1623 *Émile*, II = *Oeuvres* IV, 302 ff.

1624 Voltaire's attitude is characteristic of the general tendency: "L'école de Zénon, dans sa fière ignorance, / Pris jadis pour vertu l'insensibilité," *Discours en vers sur l'homme*, VII (Sur la vraie Vertu) = *OC* IX, 421 (cf. the attack against the "stoïques nouveaux" or the Jansenists on p. 411).

1625 Cf. the good remarks by Becker, *Gottesstaat der Philosophen*, 36 f.

1626 See Chapter II, Section 1.

However, the materials from which it is made are fundamentally different, corresponding to the essential contentual difference between the new basic attitude and the old one. Now, into the normativistic concept of nature, nature itself in the full splendor of its sensuality, in its entire perceptible richness, is to be integrated as much as possible; indeed, the normative is to become, as it were, tangible in this breathing and living nature. The natural beauty, wrested at the threshold of the Enlightenment both against the Christian concept of nature and against Cartesian mechanism, seems to provide this endeavor to render visible the normative dimension of nature with a firm foundation; it is, moreover, celebrated all the more passionately the more an ontological root is ascribed to the normative (Shaftesbury, Rousseau). Thus the new feeling for nature gives strong impetus to the interweaving of being and ought within the concept of nature, while simultaneously sensualizing the latter. It awakens around 1700 and soon manifests itself in the form of a rediscovery of the beauty of the countryside in contrast to the city, as well as in the call for a return to simple life,[1627] and by the middle of the century, under the influence of Rousseauism,[1628] becomes a collective obsession. The "exode rural" takes on a previously unknown scale (ownership of land, moreover, still being the indispensable ticket into the higher social ranks for the bourgeois), and in wanderings, one lets oneself be overwhelmed or enraptured by the sight of proud mountains, or one lays out gardens as substitutes and miniatures of the great nature, whose inner, mild, and human-friendly order is to be reflected in the artificial creation.[1629] One speaks with nature, reads one's own thoughts and feelings from its face. The moral or the ought becomes tangible precisely in this elevation. Direct contact with nature is an act of moral purification and at least the preliminary stage of moral perfection, if not this perfection itself.

The same desire, to make the normative component of the concept of nature, as it were, tangible in the perceptible environment itself, in order thereby to vividly present the rooting of the "ought" in "being," that is, its entire objectivity and binding force, also largely animates the primitivism and exoticism that represent one of the great

1627 Atkinson, *Sentiment de la Nature*, 18 ff., 66 ff.
1628 Mornet, *Sentiment de la Nature*, 204 ff.
1629 op. cit., 22 ff., 98 ff., 259 ff., 237 ff.

constant fashions in the Age of Enlightenment. The exotic models are utopian idealizations or embodiments of pure nature, that is, of pure norm, and are employed precisely in this capacity as weapons against the "unnatural" = "unreasonable" existing conditions: the weapon becomes all the sharper the purer the form in which the normative appears on the scene. This specifically Enlightenment function of exoticism can also be demonstrated chronologically by the fact that the invocation of primitive customs for critical purposes becomes more frequent around 1675,[1630] only to subside in the late Enlightenment; even after 1789, however, English Jacobins still deploy the Noble Savage against the corrupted aristocratic culture.[1631] Its brilliant career in Enlightenment poetry[1632] and theater[1633] is well known, and we also know what influence the idealization of primitive life in travel literature (typical for this are the three volumes of Baron de Lahontan that appeared in 1703) had on Rousseau.[1634] Here, however, we want to highlight only one little-noticed aspect of exotic literature in order to make visible the full scope of the normativistic concept of nature. Namely, there is always, consciously or unconsciously, an attempt in it to incorporate culture into uncorrupted nature, from which one expects a healing of the former and at the same time an expansion of the latter, so that the expanded nature could be identified with the reason and morality realized within the framework of culture. If the possibility of such a realization of nature as reason within culture did not exist, then the reference to the wisdom of the savages would be completely irrelevant for European circumstances, or at least blunt as a critical weapon. In the idealized depictions of primitive life, it is striking that the noble, good, etc., savages do not live scattered in struggle with naked necessity, but rather live in harmonious communities[1635] and are aware of their value, often lecturing on the meaning and constitution of good institutions; not coincidentally, these depictions inspired the drafting of communist utopias.[1636] This

1630 Atkinson, *Relations de Voyages*, 20.
1631 Fairchild, *Noble Savage*, 140 ff.
1632 Fitzgerald, *First Follow Nature*, 28 ff.
1633 Chinard, *L'Amérique et le rêve exotique*, 225 ff.
1634 op. cit., 167 ff. (on Lahontan), 345 ff. (on Rousseau).
1635 Such as the reports of Atkinson, *Relations de Voyages*, 46 ff.
1636 Not only in the 16th and 17th centuries, but also in the 18th, see

concerns a "barbarism civilized," as the author of a *Berimtes* already formulated it in 1640.[1637]

Pure nature, that is, the primitive in the sense of the original, is thus not *eo ipso* the opposite of culture, if by culture is fundamentally understood the social coexistence of humans and if man is regarded as by nature a social being. In this way, the prevailing view in the Enlightenment can be summarized in broad terms. Primitivism in the form of a radical rejection of social life hardly came into consideration, not even with Rousseau;[1638] a return to nature actually does not mean a return to vegetative existence, but rather a purification of culture from all that is "unnatural" = "unreasonable." Precisely because primitivism was generally (mis)understood in this way, criticism of contemporary culture was undertaken not only by pointing to the customs of noble savages but also to the way of life, according to general opinion, of civilized peoples. The Sinomania of the Enlightenment, rightly described as a unique example of "cultural misunderstanding on a wide scale",[1639] ran parallel to its primitivism and was sometimes pursued by the same individuals.[1640] The example of Voltaire, under whom the Sinomania of the 18th century reached its apotheosis,[1641] is particularly instructive for the opposite reason; for in his case, the idealization of Chinese culture is coupled with mistrust of primitivism,[1642] because the latter could endanger the widely desired reconciliation of nature and culture through the continuous

Gounard, *Légende du bon Sauvage*, 72 ff., who rightly places special emphasis on this aspect.

1637 Wright, *Noble Savage of Madagascar*, 115.

1638 On the real meaning of Rousseau's so-called hostility to culture, which nevertheless did not exclude the possibility of a "true" culture or a "natural" social life (otherwise the social model developed in the *Contrat Social* would simply be senseless), see the good analysis by Crocker, *Age of Crisis*, 367 ff.

1639 Guy, *French Image of China*, 11.

1640 The forms it took in England were quite similar to the French, see Appleton, *Cycle of Cathay*, especially 41 ff., 120 ff.

1641 Guy, *French Image of China*, 285.

1642 Voltaire's position is particularly instructive for the general tendency: he actually approves of the Spanish conquest of America and the extermination of the Indians, because for him they were "savages" precisely because they supposedly had no social life. For Voltaire's stance on this, see Chinard, *L'Amérique et le rêve exotique*, 367 ff.

undifferentiated defamation of the latter. By contrast, the refined Chinese seemed almost to embody the possibility of a culture marked by reason or nature; above all, their alleged deism[1643] and the binding of their morality more to political-social than religious standards[1644] were considered proofs of this. Thus, the identification of nature and reason paved the way for the inclusion of culture into nature. Without this inclusion, the Enlightenment's concept of nature and rationalism would have proven too impoverished to lay claim to leadership at the socio-cultural level; it would have been equally disastrous for it to renounce the anchoring of reason or its own norms in nature or to leave the defense of culture to the theologians.

1643 Ironically, the legend of a Chinese deism was fabricated by Jesuits, who thereby wanted to prove the Chinese were ripe for Christian conversion and simultaneously reinforce the *argumentum e consensu gentium* for God's existence. But this carried complications: if God was known to nations without revelation, then perhaps he could be grasped by reason alone. Either revelation is superfluous, or the *consensus gentium* proof is false—in which case the Chinese could be considered moral atheists. This was partly Bayle's interpretation, following earlier Sinophile libertines like La Mothe, while Leibniz rather sided with the Jesuits and assumed a mimetic natural religion (see Pinot, *Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique*, 184, 307 ff., 318 ff., 336 ff., and Guy, *French Image of China*, 75 f., 89 f., 118 ff., 124 ff., 143 ff.).
1644 Guy, *French Image of China*, 131 ff.

CHAPTER SIX
The Conflict Between the Causal and the Normative

1. Outlook

Through the factual deification of nature as the interweaving of Being and Ought, the long conflict between *natura* and *gratia* came to a provisional end; nature triumphed clearly, and the supernatural or divine arbitrariness was eliminated (this had actually already been partially accomplished by Scholasticism, but the Enlighteners wanted nothing to do with a good Scholasticism—especially not when they were following it themselves).[1645] Man now appeared to be master over his own fate, since he no longer had to expect his salvation from an unpredictable act of divine will, but from the observance of fixed laws which arose from the unchanging essence of nature and were therefore known in advance. Nature as Being and Ought embodied both physical and normative necessity or lawfulness against transcendent self-will—and since the concept of necessity was primarily conceived polemically, it seemed to the Enlighteners to be fully compatible with their own concept of freedom: necessity was supposed precisely to expose the arbitrariness of the opposing position and to substantiate the bindingness, indispensability, indeed the inevitability, of their own (on this polemical use of the concept of necessity already in the early phase of modern Rationalism, the necessary has been said elsewhere).[1646] This self-understanding, however, was only an encouraging ideological fiction, which had to overlook the formal similarity of its own structure of thought with that of its opponent in order to remain viable; since the factual opposition

1645 See above, Chapter IV, Section 3b and also Section 5 of this chapter.
1646 See above, Chapter II, Section 2b.

between freedom and necessity continued to exist, the Enlighteners soon became entangled in the old logical difficulties—which this time, in itself already signifying the (not logical but actual) victory over the theological worldview—were articulated in secularized form. This was not an oversight that could or should be corrected, but absolutely necessary for fulfilling the ideological function of the new worldview, especially since it had to take over the life-sustaining functions of domination from the old one, albeit with different signs. The following remarks on the logical contradiction of the normativist Enlightenment are therefore not to be understood as a "critique" of it, and even less as an expression of nostalgia for the (equally mired in logical difficulties) intact world of theology,[1647] but merely as a scientific observation of the necessary connection between logical contradiction and successful fulfillment of ideological function.

The reference to the physical and normative lawfulness of nature, which applied fully to human beings as well, served initially to eliminate concepts such as that of original sin, which had ensured the guidance of everyday human life in line with the power interests of the opposing side. In the new worldview, original sin could by definition find no place, since its assumption would at the same time mean the assumption of a sudden rupture in the lawful course of nature, or of a transformation of human nature that was inherently inexplicable. The concept of necessity thus supported the new freedom of man from this side. But what was lost from the other side was at least equally important, as became clear after the initial enthusiasm and under the pressure of the increasingly looming nihilism. In order to restrict—or eliminate altogether—the scope of divine arbitrariness, one now undertook to trace everything in which one had hitherto suspected the invisible hand of God directing human destinies back to natural causes. Not God, but biological, geographical, and sociocultural factors (in other words: sensuousness on all levels) were now supposed to explain the temperament, disposition, and behavior of human beings. Every discovery in this direction was celebrated as a new victory in the struggle against theology or against the old forms of rule and their representatives. The pure intellect, as the faculty of freedom in man, was—despite all the emphasis on the good nature of man—just as much debased as God was degraded. The triumph of determinism

1647 See below, Chapter VII, Note 9.

once again put at risk the very freedom it had aimed to preserve against the arbitrariness of God. Whereas the old dear God could be moved by tears, prayers, and sincere repentance, and his grace or arbitrariness could at times even turn in favor of man, there was no escape from the lawfulness of nature; the new dominion could not be influenced and held out no promise of miracles. A tragic irony lay in the attempt to rescue human freedom from the supernatural. Freedom from the supernatural became dependence on the natural. The structure of the brain and nerves, climate, race, economy, and custom —in short, everything that had been marshaled against intellectualism or the mighty acts of God—now appeared as an even more relentless master than the old one. Against divinity or theology it had been claimed that they crushed human individuality through the heteronomous character of their commandments or through the emphasis on man's nullity before God—and now one sought to ground the new freedom by appealing to laws and instances before which the concrete individual was just as much a *quantité négligeable*. The contradiction announced itself when one appealed to the lawful—that is, the impersonal or supra-personal—in order to assert a freedom that was described as a deeply personal-existential emancipation, and was in fact felt as such by many.

Nevertheless, the new supra-personal or supra-human was essentially constituted differently than that of the opponent, and in the vehemence of its polemical opposition, the similarity of their formal structures—and thus also the internal logic of the new position—was repressed from consciousness. Confidence and pride were great, for it seemed that one had finally succeeded in setting up a worldview at least equal to that of the opponent. And since the opposing worldview was by definition equated with slavery, mere opposition to it—regardless of its internal cogency—was likewise, by definition, regarded as a contribution to the theory and reality of freedom. For the new ideological position, both the necessity directed against the opponent's concept of freedom and the freedom directed against the opponent's concept of necessity were equally indispensable. The collaboration of freedom and necessity in a shared polemical aim enabled their coexistence within the concept of nature, even though they were, in themselves, contradictory. It was the singular goal of the

polemic that concealed the contradiction.[1648] Only the disappearance of the shared goal—or the clear defeat of the opponent—brought the internal logical weakness of the new position fully to light, thereby triggering new ideological confrontations on a new level and between new opponents, who, however, had to take up or vary older arguments. The interweaving of the causal and the normative in the concept of nature was broken down into its components; the causal (in the sense of biological and socio-historical sensuousness) as determinant of the will now turned against the normative, which could only rely on a firm concept of freedom, or on the unassailable freedom of the will—without which any talk of morality becomes empty. Nihilism seemed, at least in the long run, to be gaining the upper hand, just as many theologians had prophesied—partly in despair and partly with Schadenfreude.

The suspicion of nihilism clung to Enlightenment positions from their earliest days, and their representatives were therefore compelled —well before the elimination of the main theological adversary (and indeed in order to make this elimination easier)—to energetically defend themselves against it. For normativist Enlightenment, as for any ideological position that lays claim to power on the social level (in other words: propagates a new morality for the "better" shaping of human life), it was absolutely necessary to demonstrate that it had better norms to offer, and was therefore more capable than the adversary of solving human—both individual and supra-individual—

1648 Ehrard (Idée de Nature, 793) has aptly formulated it: *"l'idée de nature serait menacée d'éclater si ses deux aspects n'étaient également indispensables au combat philosophique."* Equally apt is his observation of the paradoxical replacement of divine arbitrariness by natural determinism (op. cit., 666f.). I wish to highlight this work with particular emphasis. Ehrard's merit lies in his recognition of the concept of nature in its ideological-polemical function, and in identifying the Enlightenment's continuous vacillation between the causal and the normative as grounded precisely in the polemical-ideological character of the concept of nature—and simultaneously in the adoption or secularization of the theological opponent's patterns of thought. In my opinion and to my knowledge, this is the most important book to date on the thought style of normative Enlightenment in general, even though it only describes the intellectual currents of a particular period and country. The author's outstanding familiarity with the sources and sure methodological orientation had to result in this paradigmatic achievement.

problems, that is, of assuming the guidance of human affairs.[1649] The necessity of victory in the question of values was, incidentally, quite clear to the militant Enlighteners. Diderot expressed it epigrammatically—and not coincidentally these lines are addressed to Voltaire: "Ce n'est pas assez d'en savoir plus qu'eux [the theologians], il faut leur montrer que nous sommes meilleurs, et que la philosophie fait plus de gens de bien que la grâce suffisante ou efficace.[1650]" The great majority of Enlighteners therefore fought on two fronts at once—against the true rival and against the false brother. For this reason, not only the previously described polemical collaboration between the causal and the normative became evident in Enlightenment positions, but simultaneously also their contradiction or competition. This occurred because there was an effort to dilute determinism—at least to the extent necessary to initially bypass nihilism. Dilution of determinism now inevitably meant (at least partial) separation of the causal from the normative for the sake of preserving the autonomy of the latter; but this (partial) separation in turn brought with it their (partial) open conflict, which until then had to remain concealed and also could not be played out to the end, since, on the other hand, the interweaving of *Sein* and *Sollen* could not simply be abandoned. One was caught, as it were, in a bind, and the confusion—or circular thinking—only deepened when attempts were made to resolve the conflict between causal and normative, which arose during the effort to soften blind determinism, through new constructions of wishful thinking. This typical mode of thought appears at all essential levels of Enlightenment intellectual efforts, i.e., the theological-cosmological, the moral-philosophical, and the general-philosophical. Why this had to be so, we have suggested elsewhere: on the aforementioned various levels, a single ideological attitude found expression through the rehabilitation of sensuousness, and it was therefore to be expected that the logical implications or difficulties of this attitude would manifest simultaneously at all levels.

1649 "Eighteenth-century philosophy … was intensely aware of the challenge to redefine the guarantees of social cohesion and morality. The *philosophes* were most anxious to show that not they, but their opponents, were the anarchists from the point of view of the natural order," Talmon, *Totalitarian Democracy*, 22.

1650 Letter of September 29, 1762 (= *OC*, XIX, 464).

2. God Between Spirit and Nature or: The Enlightenment Between Worship, Neutralization, and Instrumentalization of God

A convincing discussion of theology (in the broad sense of discourse about or controversy over God) in the Age of Enlightenment must be able to explain the at least prima facie paradoxical fact that, although atheists constituted a small minority and were even denounced by the great majority of Enlighteners, the overall outcome of the intellectual ferment still produced a considerable weakening of God's position, in which his imminent dethronement or killing is already announced (the intellectual development, however, proceeded hand in hand with the social one).[1651] Only when posed in this way can the question be fruitfully addressed. The frequent embarrassment surrounding it stems objectively from the paradoxical nature of the situation, which one often seeks—frequently for polemical reasons—more to avoid than to explain: either by overestimating the influence of the atheists (above all, Marxists follow in this assessment the conservative theologians of the 18th century as well as some modern

1651 The socio-historical background of this dramatic reversal of divine providence must be kept in mind, especially since only against it do central slogans of the Enlightenment become understandable at all (e.g., the demand for tolerance is only conceivable and enforceable on the basis of modern statehood). The beginning of the end of God is marked by the victory of the state over the churches, and the 18th century is precisely a time in which the state wins decisive battles in the centuries-long struggle against the churches (secularization in the legal-political sense, encompassing key areas such as land ownership, jurisdiction, and education). God's power had always been just as great as that of his representatives on Earth, and so it had to gradually wane once these representatives, after persistent resistance—through force or compromise—submitted to an instance that acted not primarily, if at all, in the name of God, but in the name of man and his well-being. That instance was the state. The tolerance granted by the state already implied that God was considered less important than social peace—that is, the state's own self-preservation. From this dialectic between Church-God on one side and State-Man on the other, it becomes clear why the total state must be atheistic.

nostalgists of the lost "unity of Christian Europe"), or by pointing to the still significant, indeed practically decisive influence of Christian thought on the people of the 18th century and not least on the representatives of normativist Enlightenment themselves. The former is false, the latter, although correct in essential respects, still cannot make intelligible certain specific features of that movement which would prove decisive for the later development of culture in Europe and the world. We aim here to proceed in a more differentiated manner, not by focusing on the self-understanding or self-presentation of the actors in intellectual history—which, incidentally, tends to die with them—but rather by concentrating our attention on the structure and function of the concepts they employed, in which the logical causes of long-term developments are in fact embedded.

A basic prerequisite for clarifying the aforementioned paradox is the precise determination of why most Enlighteners cannot or do not want to simply dethrone God, even though, on the other hand, they must combat (more mildly or tactically: reform, renew, "correctly" interpret) positive Christianity—which they also regard as one of their most urgent tasks. Voltaire's battle cry "*Écrasons l'Infâme*"[1652] was aimed at the Church, not at the deity. This twofold or two-meaning stance can only be understood in light of God's traditional function as the embodiment and guarantor of all values that make social life possible. In the Age of Enlightenment, this function is still alive and effective—it is only now being seriously questioned on a broader scale. The traditional monopolization of values by God made any rejection of God initially appear as an undermining of values or of humanly dignified life altogether. The Enlighteners did not live in an age where atheism and skepticism were intelligible, self-evident, or even unavoidable. Suspicion of atheism still equaled suspicion of nihilism, and the Enlighteners could not afford to provoke the former because they could not afford the latter in polemical terms.[1653] Their avowal of God—whatever they may have meant by it—is in most cases not merely a tactical move for survival in a society where people are involved with the Church from baptism to burial, but rather an objective ideological reflection of the still-dominant and long-

1652 Letter to d'Alembert, 28 Dec. 1762 = *OC*, XLII, 293; to Damilaville, 7 Jan. 1764 = *OC*, XLIII, 78.

1653 Cf. the remarks by Becker, *Gottesstaat*, 54f.

sanctioned link between values and God—or else that avowal represents the manner in which the power of the Christian past impresses itself into their own souls. The Enlighteners carry out their work in an interregnum, and the Janus face of the age also marks their own.[1654] For both tactical ("dishonest") and psychological-ideological ("honest") reasons, they therefore cannot avoid seeing in God the guarantor of socially indispensable values. It is precisely God's suitability as *"sacré lien de la société"* that Voltaire has in mind when he —significantly, already in a late phase of his development, when he was no longer inclined to derive *tout est bien* straightforwardly from God—[1655]emphasizes the necessity of inventing God if he did not exist;[1656] though he should be invented only for the people, not for the "educated" *"au-dessus du peuple"*.[1657] Even semi-nihilists like La Mettrie are convinced that human aggressiveness can be effectively kept in check by religious superstition.[1658] It would be superficial to assume that the Enlighteners clung to God not for normative but, for instance, for cosmological reasons. For in strictly logical terms, little is gained by positing God as the cause of motion and rejecting the self-motion of matter. The question is thereby rather displaced than solved —or one simply chooses one (in itself inexplicable) ultimate ontological instance over another. Where there was logical equivalence (and very often even where there was not), the normative viewpoint had to be decisive.

After the massive social and ideological upheavals of the past two centuries, it is sometimes difficult for the non-theologian to fully recall the earlier self-evidence or obviousness of the link between values and God, along with all its implications. The Enlightenment initiated and significantly advanced the dissolution of this bond to a socially relevant degree, but at the same time it bore the burden of that very bond itself. The new ontological instances, which were meant to serve as final grounds for the justification of values, had not yet proven themselves sufficiently—or, due to their nature, were not capable of fulfilling normative tasks which, precisely by the long-term effects of

1654 Cf. below, Section 5 of this chapter.
1655 Cf. below, Section 5 of this chapter.
1656 *Épitre CIV* (1769) = *OC*, X, 403.
1657 *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article *Athéisme* = *OC*, XVII, 463.
1658 Cf. below, Chapter VII, Section 3.

these very instances, were supposed to be regarded as more or less superfluous, yet which, in the time of the interregnum, still appeared to many Enlighteners, despite all shifts in standpoint, as highly pressing. Thus, for example, nature as such could not vouch for the immortality of the soul and thereby for the possibility of a final just reward or punishment for an individual's way of life.[1659] With regard to similar questions, nature functioned, so to speak, normatively mute.[1660] The conflict between the causal and the normative in the field of theology or cosmology thus took the form that God, on the one hand, was more or less absorbed by nature or the realm of causality—whereby the idea of creation faded in the context of the ontological elevation of matter—but, on the other hand, was kept separate from nature in his role as the embodiment of the normative. Out of fear of the possible meaninglessness of the world or of the suspicion of nihilism, people thus refrained from a complete identification of the causal and the normative, and instead referred the latter to an independent instance, which was usually the personal God as creator of nature, or as the intellect of nature, or the intellect in nature: the boundaries remained fluid in any case, especially since even after this confession of belief in God, the concept of nature continued to be used in full scope whenever the polemical need of the moment demanded it.

This typical constellation can best be illustrated by the example of a thinker like Voltaire, who—just like Diderot in another respect—

1659 Voltaire's position is very characteristic. He grounds the immortality of the soul by referring to the evil in the world (*Poème sur le désastre* = *OC*, IX, 478), i.e., to the punishing or rewarding function of God (*Dieu et les hommes*, II = *OC*, XXVIII, 133; *L'A, B, C* = *OC*, XXVII, 399f.), and emphasizes the social usefulness of the belief in immortality in this sense (Letter to d'Argental from 20 April 1769 = *OC*, L, 454); but when he argues not directly morally but rather ontologically-anthropologically, he declares his ignorance about the nature of the soul and doubts its substantial character (*Dict. Phil.*, article *Âme* = *OC*, XVII, 135f., 141f.; *Lettres de Memmius* XV = *OC*, XXVIII, 457f.; *De l'âme* = *OC*, XXIX, 331, 339); on this level, he sees himself as unable to argue for immortality; only revelation could demonstrate it, he says (*Dict. Phil.*, article *Âme* = *OC*, XVII, 145). Cf. Pellissier, *Voltaire philosophe*, 52ff., 173f.; also Pomeau, *Religion de Voltaire*, 399f.

1660 As Voltaire phrased it in *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*: "Nature is mute, one questions her in vain; one needs a God who speaks to mankind" (*OC*, IX, 475).

can be regarded as a veritable inventory of the currents and structures of thought of normativist Enlightenment in all its contradictions. When Voltaire polemicizes against atheism, he typically emphasizes the intellectual character of God; only the assumption that God is himself an *intelligence ineffable* could satisfactorily explain intelligence in man (i.e., his capacity for morality)—[1661]something that the materialism of Holbach could not achieve.[1662] God as intellect is clearly separated from nature; he is the great geometer and *fabricateur*, while nature is not something original, but entirely a work of art,[1663] whose constitution is determined by *les lois mathématiques* and *la plus profonde géométrie*.[1664] (The closeness of this model to the mechanism of the 17th century makes clear once again that the atheistic materialism Voltaire opposes here is, in the decisive points, more a refutation than a continuation of classical mechanism.)[1665] Voltaire's theology, however, takes on an essentially different tone when his polemical attention is not directed toward morally threatening atheism but, for example, toward the dualist Malebranche. This time, a true interweaving of God and nature is envisioned, even if the two are by no means identified. God is admittedly not *l'universalité des choses*, but rather *une émanation de lui*.[1666] In this interweaving with nature, God is—significantly—no longer primarily intellect, but *force* and *action*, and in light of this new determination of essence, the concept of creation begins to falter: a God who had done nothing prior to creation is hardly conceivable.[1667] The potential threat to morality posed by this pantheistic-sounding theology is countered by Voltaire with the argument that we cannot know exactly what the interweaving of God and nature looks like—i.e., to what extent it touches on God's personality—while he had no

1661 *Dict. Phil.*, article *Athéisme* = *OC*, XVII, 469, 464.
1662 To d'Alembert (27 July 1770) and to the Duchesse de Choiseul (8 October 1770) = *OC*, XLVII, 153, 216.
1663 "Tout art." This expression is borrowed from Pope's *Essay on Man*, I, v. 289: "All Nature is but Art." Notably, just a few lines earlier, Pope refers to Nature as the body of God. This indicates a similarly ambiguous stance.
1664 *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article "Nature" = *Œuvres complètes* (OC), XX, 115 ff.; *Histoire de Jenni*, VIII = OC, XXI, 554 ff.; *Dialogue d'Évhémère* II = OC, XXX, 471 f.
1665 Refer to Chapter IV, Section 4 above.
1666 *Tout en Dieu* = OC, XXVIII, 98.
1667 Ibid., 97.Project Gutenberg+3

difficulty in defining God (as intellect, mathematician, architect, etc.) when laying out his first model. A final note on Voltaire: it would be incorrect to attribute his panentheistic position to a late influence of Spinoza.[1668] In reality, Voltaire discovers the materiality of God, or rather his interweaving with space and time, already as a student and popularizer of Newton—that is, within the framework of the general anti-Cartesian approach of the Enlightenment.[1669] So both with regard to Voltaire's thought and to the overall thought-structure of normativist Enlightenment, it is more accurate not to speak of two conceptions following one another in time, but of a permanent vacillation between them.

The great caution—or near-panicked fear—of the suspicion of nihilism is characteristically expressed in the Enlighteners' relation to Spinoza. If one considers the fundamental parallel between the Spinozist and the Enlightenment approach—namely, their shared rejection of the Cartesian radical separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*—then the minimal direct influence of Spinoza admitted by those involved during the 18th century, and above all the persistent attempts to distance themselves from him, must appear puzzling, unless one recalls this constant fear among the Enlighteners of the ultimate logical consequences of the rehabilitation of sensuousness—namely, of the fatalistic determinism of nature. The appearance of Spinozism on the intellectual horizon had an almost repellent effect

1668 I cannot agree with Vernière's assertion that Voltaire viewed Spinozism more favorably in his later years (*Spinoza*, 524). The very passage Vernière cites on p. 525 to support his thesis is preceded by three lines in Voltaire's text where he clearly distinguishes his views from those of Spinoza! I would argue that Voltaire emphasized certain "positive" religious and moral aspects of Spinozism in his polemic against Holbach to make Holbach's materialism appear even more reprehensible. What could be worse than being more atheistic or fatalistic than Spinoza? If Voltaire's thoughts align with Spinozist ideas, it is not due to Spinoza's influence but rather because of the anti-Cartesian approach prevalent in Enlightenment thinking. In opposing Cartesian-influenced adversaries, Voltaire inadvertently approached Spinoza's ideas. However, his conscious stance was one of clear distinction from Spinoza. It's also noteworthy that in one of his latest texts (*Dialogue d'Évhémère*, 1777), Voltaire presents the same cosmological view as in the article "Nature" of the *Dictionnaire* (see OC, III, 471 f.; refer to note 20 above).

1669 *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton*, I, 2 = OC, XXII, 404 ff.

and hindered the radical revaluation of sensuousness more than it advanced it. This gave conservative theologians a perfect example to illustrate where the whole story *must* lead. For in their eyes, Spinozism was fatalism, and therefore pure amoralism, because it was atheism. Diderot confirmed this interpretation in his own way when he declared Spinoza to be the spiritual father of his *fataliste Jacques*.[1670] When he somewhat distanced himself from his own character, it was apparently because Spinoza's moral-philosophical difficulties closely resembled those of moralist materialism—at least in intent—including Diderot's own, for obvious reasons.[1671] In fact, the great substantive but also symbolic significance of the debate over Spinozism lies in the fact that in it the moral-philosophical stance is openly—and indeed provocatively—linked to the identification of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*,[1672] and thus to the abolition of the personal God. From the ontological fundamental decision that eliminates the traditional God, Spinoza's further steps in anthropology and moral philosophy can be derived without a gap. The identity of God and Nature[1673] structurally corresponds to the interweaving of soul and body.[1674] On this anthropological basis, morality as the subjugation of blind passions under the sovereign intellect appears rather senseless, as Spinoza makes clear in a direct attack on Descartes—[1675]already for the reason that in this ontological framework, freedom of the will cannot be considered.[1676] Only ignorance of the mode of interweaving of body and soul allows the illusion of human freedom to arise.[1677] More than that: judgments about good and evil depend, according to Spinoza, on the structure of the body and the brain;[1678] we do not desire a thing because it is good in itself, but rather, we call it good because we desire

1670 OC, VI, 180.
1671 Refer to Chapter VII, Section 4 below.
1672 *Ethica*, II, Prop. VII, Scholium (= Opera II, 90).
1673 "Deum seu naturam," *Ethica*, IV, Preface (= II, 206).
1674 *Ethica*, III, Prop. II, Scholium (= II, 141 ff.).
1675 *Ethica*, III, Preface (= II, 137 f.).
1676 *Ethica*, II, Prop. XLVIII (= II, 129 f.).
1677 Refer above.
1678 *Ethica*, I, Appendix (II, 82 f.).

it—[1679]especially since desire or *conatus* constitutes the essence of man.[1680] That Spinoza denies the concepts of good and evil objective validity has, to be sure, also a direct metaphysical reason—namely, his identification of reality and perfection,[1681] which eliminates evil—here as in every radical theodicy—literally from the world, and which itself is grounded in the identification of God and Nature, or *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Precisely the coherence of this chain of thought intensified its repellent effect, as it laid bare the final moral-philosophical consequences of the ontological elevation or deification of nature. One can be of divided opinion about the logical possibility of constructing a positive ethics based on Spinoza's ontological premises.[1682] But what remains unquestioned is that these premises considerably—at least theoretically—complicated any solution to the moral-philosophical problem. Hence Benedictus became Maledictus, and the deeply meaningful renaming did not fail to leave an impression on Enlighteners who were constantly battling the suspicion of nihilism—especially because, as mentioned, their own approach, in a broad but decisive sense, lay on the path Spinoza had charted: in intellectual history as in politics, it is not uncommon that one must, for tactical reasons, most forcefully distance oneself from the one to whom one is most closely related.

Spinoza had to fall into disrepute all the more because the pantheism or atheism of his *Ethics* appeared to be merely the necessary reverse side of the critique of religion and the Bible in his *Tractatus*; this association has, at least on the side of enlightened theologians, stood in

1679 *Ethica*, III, Prop. XXXIX, Scholium (= II, 170).

1680 *Ethica*, III, Prop. IX, Scholium (= II, 147).

1681 *Ethica*, IV, Preface (= II, 207 f.).

1682 Taylor has most emphatically denied this possibility, also pointing out contradictions in Spinoza's arguments in his correspondence with Blyenbergh (*Some Incoherencies*, especially pp. 282 ff.). Conversely, Joachim believes that a Spinozist ethics is possible through a clear distinction between the level of things-in-themselves and that of things-for-us: even if there is no absolute good, what is good for us is binding (*The Ethics of Spinoza*, 238 ff.). However, he overlooks that this "for us" does not necessarily encompass the entire human race, so its binding nature for specific groups or individuals could actually intensify competition among them. According to Spinozist premises, humans are responsible for their own nature—but is that nature itself absolutely responsible?

the way of a meaningful assessment of Spinoza's work in biblical criticism.[1683] Nevertheless, normativist Enlightenment could no more dispense with the Bible critic Spinoza than it could openly declare allegiance to the supposed atheist and amoralist—and this double attitude toward Spinoza is, in fact, only another manifestation of its own divided theology and its own ambivalent Christianity. Already the early English deists made extensive use of Spinoza's biblical criticism,[1684] soon followed in this by the French Enlightenment.[1685] Its most prominent representatives felt indebted to the *Tractatus* and praised it publicly, while at the same time distancing themselves from the *Ethics*—so did Montesquieu and so did Voltaire.[1686] And the Enlightenment found yet another way to mitigate the discomfort of its —at least from a theological perspective—inevitable alliance with the godless Spinoza, indeed to draw a tactical advantage from it. Following some Spinoza biographies that appeared around 1700,[1687] a Spinoza legend emerged, revolving around the figure of the virtuous, modest, and frugal philosopher—disarming even to opponents of his doctrines. In line with the (albeit often cautiously presented) argument of Bayle concerning the possibility of a moral atheism,[1688] Spinoza's example served to refute the theological thesis that any critique of positive Christianity must necessarily amount to the undermining of both individual and social morality.

Given the concrete situation of the 17th and 18th centuries, atheism could not serve as the banner of a socially relevant movement due to the suspicion of nihilism that clung to it. On the other hand, the struggle against God and Christianity—as both were represented by the Church—was an indispensable goal of the Enlightenment, indeed its very raison d'être. From this deadlock, only a reinterpretation and refunctionalization of the concept of God—or the deployment of God in the spirit and service of the Enlightenment—could offer a way out. In other words, under appeal to a suitably redefined God, both the

1683 Hirsch, *Geschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie*, I, 270 f.
1684 Colie, *Spinoza and the Early English Deists*, especially pp. 37 ff.
1685 Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 375 ff., 414 ff.
1686 Ibid., 459 ff., 509. On Rousseau's use of Spinoza's political philosophy, see p. 488 ff.
1687 See Gebhardt's edition, particularly pp. 8 f. for our context.
1688 See the next section.

new cosmology and the new value scale were (if necessary) sanctioned and immunized against theological attacks. This intellectually significant phenomenon, which we will henceforth call the instrumentalization of God, explains the paradox noted at the beginning of this section: that although atheists constituted a small minority in the Age of Enlightenment—opposed more or less equally by "progressives" and "conservatives"—in the end, God stands as the loser. In light of this highly complex and contradictory development, it is not sufficient to simply register the considerable remnants of religious and metaphysical elements in Enlightenment thought. That is certainly necessary and commendable, especially when the aim is to avoid clichés and to offer a nuanced portrait of the Age of Enlightenment or of normativist Enlightenment itself.[1689] Yet intellectually and conceptually-structurally decisive is the fact that the function of those elements changes drastically through their integration into a new ideological framework; thus the rupture occurs largely *in* and *through* precisely that which, at first glance, appears to guarantee continuity. Once again, we find here the *heterogony of ends* at work, which dooms the sincerity and depth of the personal religious faith of individual thinkers to irrelevance in the broader intellectual-historical perspective. One may even venture the claim that the attack on traditional theology is, in some cases, carried out all the more sharply and with a clear conscience precisely when the attacker believes himself thereby to be truly serving the true God. The previously mentioned inability of nature to assume all the moral tasks of God (in reality, nature could only fully replace God once those tasks—especially the punishment or reward of earthly conduct in the afterlife—were no longer felt as necessary or urgent on the social level) worked in the same direction—that is, it reinforced belief in God. But this belief now concerns a differently conceived God, and it would therefore be at least one-sided to interpret it as an ideological concession out of deference to the possible validity of the theological adversary. On the contrary. The new "purified" or "rational" concept of God aims to leave to the opponent only that aspect of God which could be dismissed as sheer nonsense—and at the same time seeks to demonstrate that the Enlightenment position is, in every respect, above

1689 For example, Becker, *Gottesstaat*, 21, and Dieckmann, *Religious and Metaphysical Elements in Enlightenment Thought, in: Studies, especially* 260, 262 ff.

suspicion of nihilism.

Before we explain the two basic forms of the instrumentalization of God in more detail, something must be said about his neutralization. This generally occurs through the thesis that God's will and nature are unfathomable. Behind its pious guise lies a polemical thrust: for from an unfathomable God, no concrete and binding commandments can be derived, and thus there can be no earthly representatives of God who exclusively know and communicate his will. In other words: God, as a source of authority in the service of the Church, is eliminated. Already Bayle had strongly emphasized the difficulties of arriving at a clear and generally accepted definition of God's essence and added that the zeal of those striving to do so was not driven by a purely practical-moral interest, but rather by "*un désir ardent que leur secte soit triomphante, ou bien établie, et fort en état ou de subjuguer les autres, ou de se défendre contre elles*".[1690] That the neutralization of God is only the first step toward his instrumentalization in the sense of normativist Enlightenment is shown by the persistence with which the same Bayle defends the goodness (i.e., a specific attribute) of God, when it comes to refuting the doctrine of original sin—that is, an ideological cornerstone of the Church's claim to guide humanity toward salvation. Precisely in his polemic against the theologian Jacquelot, Bayle speaks of goodness as *"le principal caractère de la Nature divine"*; it is unimaginable, he says, that such a God would use original sin and evil to execute his plans concerning man and the universe.[1691] It is, however, not to be overlooked that this invocation of divine goodness stems less from inner conviction than from the intent to fight the opponent with his own weapons; nevertheless, the double posture cannot be mistaken when viewed in light of polemical needs—especially since, in this case, the opponent is taken at his word, while he was previously to be refuted in general and from the outside when it came to the very possibility of defining God's essence.

This double line of argument became a hallmark of Enlightenment theology. Voltaire, who, following Bayle,[1692] declares

1690 *Contin. des pensées diverses*, § XX = *Oeuvres Div.*, III, 214 f.
1691 *Rep. aux quest. d'un Prov.*, II Part., CLI, CLV, CLXV = *Oeuvr. Div.* III, 812, 824, 846; *Entret. de Maxime et Thémiste*, XV = *Oeuvr. Div.* IV, 59 ff.
1692 Mason, *Bayle and Voltaire*, 121.

that in view of *"la faiblesse de notre entendement"* we must admit our "*ignorance sur la Nature de la Divinité*",[1693] nonetheless seems on the other hand to be sufficiently familiar with the essence and will of God to be able to affirm that God could not possibly torment man for all eternity.[1694] Similar statements admittedly come predominantly from Voltaire's earlier period, yet even his later protests against God's toleration of evil[1695] imply the same assumption: that a specific, indispensable attribute of God—such as goodness—is fundamentally incompatible with the existing world order. This time, however, the signs are reversed. Another conviction of Voltaire's (also typical for the Enlightenment) likewise targets the curtailment of ecclesiastical authority and rests just as much on a particular conception of God: God the Almighty does not need our worship (thus the Church's related duties are not so important), but is honored above all by our virtue and good works.[1696] (The young Diderot put it more radically: superstition is worse than atheism.)[1697] Neutralization and instrumentalization of God—i.e., denial of the possibility of determining his essence, and simultaneously the determination of his essence in terms of the postulates of normativist Enlightenment—go hand in hand also in Rousseau. To support the purely emotional certainty of his belief in God, and also to preempt ecclesiastical claims to power, he asserts the complete sterility of theological-metaphysical discussions,[1698] while on the other hand, in the interest of opposing the doctrines of original sin and eternal damnation, he identifies God's goodness with his omnipotence[1699] and thereby undertakes a concrete definition of God's essence. This ambiguity in Rousseau's argument, incidentally, did not escape Bishop de Beaumont, who drew attention to it in his *Condamnation* of *Émile*.[1700]

1693 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Dieu, Dieux* = *OC*, XVIII, 359.
1694 *Le Pour et le Contre* = *OC* IX, 359; *Poème sur la Loi Nat.*, IV = *OC*, IX, 460; *Henriade* VII = *OC*, VIII, 176.
1695 See below, Section 5 of this chapter.
1696 *Le Pour et le Contre* = *OC* IX, 362; *Oreilles du comte de Chesterfield*, IV = *OC*, XXI, 585.
1697 *Pensées Phil.* XII = *OC*, I, 130.
1698 *Émile* IV = *Oeuvres*, IV, 565, 599.
1699 *loc. cit.*, 588 f., 591 f.; cf. the *Lettre à Beaumont* in the same volume, 938.
1700 cf. Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 120 f.

What has been said thus far should have indicated one fundamental form of the instrumentalization of God: it concerns the assignment to God of the role of founder and guarantor of a morality that differs significantly from that attributed to positive Christianity (or to the caricature of it drawn for polemical purposes), i.e., one that appears much more secular. This form of the instrumentalization of God, which we shall call the *moral* one (as opposed to the *scientific-natural*), receives its essential shaping through English Deism. Admittedly, Deism does not initially appear as a closed system; rather, its fundamental aspects (critique of the Bible and miracles, definition of the relationship between Church and State and demands for tolerance, autonomy of theoretical reason against authority and revelation, autonomy of practical reason and subordination of religion to morality) are mostly elaborated and represented by different authors.[1701] What is of interest here, however, is only the broad common denominator or general guiding principle of Deist thought—namely, the demand for agreement between reason and religion, which itself rests on the assumed complete rationality of God. The Deist rejection of any divine voluntarism guarantees the immutability of divine commandments and thereby opens up the possibility not only of fixing them once and for all or of interpreting them authoritatively (such that interpretive authorities are no longer needed in the future), but also of regarding them as having existed from all eternity (such that the past activity of those authorities could now be denounced as betrayal of the original, true religion). Now, the demand for agreement between revealed religion and reason, no matter how moderate and impartial it may sound, implies the supremacy of reason. For it postulates the exclusion of revelation in any form unacceptable to reason. Whether such agreement exists or not is to be decided by reason, not revelation; reason is even supposed to determine whether the given revelation is genuine or not.[1702] More concretely, this means a claim by the self-proclaimed representatives of

1701 Lechler, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus*, 325. At least descriptively, this book remains indispensable. Cf. however the excellent presentation of English Deism by Hirsch, *Geschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie*, I, 292 ff., and of course also Stephen, *English Thought* (Vol. 1). Also Torrey, *Voltaire and the English Deists*, especially 28 ff., 65 ff., 109 ff., 157 ff.

1702 Locke, *Essay*, IV, 18 § 8 (= II, 423 f.).

reason to prevail over those who presented themselves as the authoritative interpreters of revelation. The replacement of the latter by the former is once again to be achieved through the refunctionalization of religion and of God in the name of reason. By demanding not the abolition of revealed religion but its agreement with reason, the goal is essentially to redirect its still considerable social power toward purposes other than those it had previously served, and at the same time to radically eliminate the suspicion of nihilism. Religion is to be refunctioned because its social power (both tactically-subjectively and objectively—that is, through one's own religious conviction) must be taken into account, and at the same time the suspicion of atheism or nihilism must be avoided, also out of regard for religion's social power. In this complicated situation, the need for the instrumentalization of God grows—via the detour of the reconciliation of religion and reason.

There can be no doubt that the reduction of religion to reason was intended to break the theological monopoly on interpretation. Toland states explicitly that mysterious doctrines (*mysteries*) were introduced into Christianity by priests with the aim "that we might constantly depend upon them for the Explication".[1703] Since from now on the highest authority of interpretation was to be reason, those doctrines were not merely to be reinterpreted, but effectively *interpreted away*. That reason itself might also be in need of interpretation—so that the struggle over the monopoly of interpretation might continue despite the elimination of its current holders and despite significant changes in content—is scarcely considered. The party of reason, and thus reason itself, still appears largely unified, because it has not yet defeated its adversaries. From the unity and self-evidence of reason, people hoped for an end to the bloody confusion of the religious wars, which, according to Collins, were caused by the disagreements of the priests over theological questions.[1704]

Collins, by the way, shows the same clear understanding of the question of interpretative authority as Toland,[1705] and the same goes

1703 *Christianity not Mysterious*, Sect. II, Chap. I = p. 26; cf. *Preface*, xviii ff.
1704 *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, Sect. II = p. 46 ff.
1705 *op. cit.*, Sect. III = p. 107 ff.

for Tindal.[1706] To oppose the Church's claim to interpretative monopoly *a limine*, and to deprive those disputes of their ground which supposedly arose from the existence of mediators between God and man,[1707] Tindal maintains that "intellectual communication between God and Man" would rest upon "self-evident notions".[1708] The religion of reason, he says, is written "in the Hearts of every One of us from the first Creation".[1709] Thus Tindal can supplement—or support—his demand for the elimination of mediating or interpreting authorities in the future with a radical reassessment of the traditional Christian conception of the past. For him, the purification of religion should not merely consist in a return to early Christianity, as was often demanded in the 18th century, but should be accomplished by direct reconnection to the original law of God—so to speak, by relocating man to the day of his creation. Christianity is thus significantly downgraded as a later phenomenon, and the Gospel is simply placed alongside the *Law of Nature*.[1710] The latter, incidentally, is logically and chronologically prior; for it is "not capable of additions," and God "impresses" it "on Christians as well as Others".[1711] As we can see, belief in God here leads to a questioning of traditional belief altogether —an impressive example indeed of the possible consequences of the instrumentalization of God. The use of God to defend the new value scale, in which the right to earthly happiness was heavily emphasized, goes so far that Tindal accuses the Christian martyrs of having taken their severe suffering upon themselves *against the will of God*![1712]

In many respects, the English deists continued the religious-philosophical work of the Cambridge Platonists. We know that their identification of reason and religion (which was, however, less radical in content than that of Toland and Tindal) was indebted to the model of mathematical natural science in the broad sense: the commandments of reason-religion were to be as stable and binding as

1706 *Christianity as old as the Creation*, XI = p. 170 ff.
1707 *op. cit.*, XI = p. 141 ff.
1708 *op. cit.*, XII = p. 184.
1709 *op. cit.*, VI = p. 60.
1710 *op. cit.*, VII = p. 70.
1711 *op. cit.*, IX = p. 135.
1712 *op. cit.*, VIII = p. 89.

mathematically graspable regularities.[1713] From this consideration, the internal connection between the *moral* instrumentalization of God and the *scientific-natural* one becomes clear. God is thus to protect not only the new value scale, but also the new conception of nature—and even defend it against his own traditional followers or representatives. The scientific-natural instrumentalization of God had already announced itself in the 17th century through the use of Christian commonplaces in the service of the new model of nature;[1714] in Descartes, God appears not least as a purely conceptual entity who fulfills certain functions within the overall framework.[1715] After the tremendous rise of natural science, no God can endure for long who does not respect—or even declare—the laws it formulates. His dominion is not denied in itself, but that over which he rules is now structurally determined by natural science, so that necessary conclusions must be drawn about the physiognomy of the ruler from the shape of what is ruled. God may rule, but only over *this* nature. God may create, but only *this* world. If until then God had to submit to theological decisions, now he becomes dependent on those who discover or define the laws of nature and the world: here we see the gradual implementation of that ideological stance which associates itself with the rehabilitation of sensuousness in the sense of modern rationalism. Although God is now in fact defined in relation to nature, both in the religious self-understanding of many researchers and in the public pronouncements of some less devout figures, the reverse often appears to be the case. This, however, should not obscure the actual shift in priorities that has occurred; rather, it should be viewed as a necessary phenomenon of the interregnum. To be sure, scientific constructions are often still made with explicit reference to God's traditional competencies, but even these now present themselves as necessary logical conclusions drawn from new findings in specific areas of natural science—or as the true metaphysical interpretation of those findings. Even where theological considerations undoubtedly dominate over scientific perspectives (in the narrower sense), what remains decisive is that these scientific perspectives can no longer simply be ignored, but must instead be "correctly" interpreted: the indispensability of scientific perspectives

1713 See above, Chapter III, Section 3.
1714 See above, Chapter II, Section 2 b.
1715 See above, Chapter III, Section 2.

will ultimately transform into their priority. — Of course, the described binding of God to the laws of nature does not always and necessarily amount to the same thing as his ontological interweaving with nature. Yet even in this case, the conflict between the causal and the normative reasserts itself. If God—still the embodiment of the normative—is constructed with regard to natural causality, the question arises to what extent he may violate the latter in order to realize normative ends, or conversely, to what extent catastrophes arising from natural causality can be reconciled with his normatively understood essence or his goodness, etc. Only against the background of the intensifying conflict between the causal and the normative, brought about by the instrumentalization of God, does it become comprehensible why a natural event such as the Lisbon earthquake gave rise to such a major controversy.[1716]

Newton's example illustrates both the general usefulness of a scientific-natural instrumentalization of God and its difficulties for a believer—difficulties which ultimately made a perforation of constant natural causality necessary in order to secure the actual sovereignty of God over nature. In Newton, the instrumentalization of God first takes place in the form of deriving the concept of absolute space from the concept of God, already in an early phase of his intellectual development.[1717] Absolute space then detaches itself from its theological presuppositions—that is, it becomes autonomous as a mathematical-scientific entity and makes possible the new laws of motion and thus the new physics. In the resulting model of nature, God reappears in a different instrumental function: namely, as the non-mechanical cause of mechanism. He is thus—not at least if one follows the purely logical thread of the argument—not presupposed, but analytically discovered, and precisely at the point where scientific analysis, after having integrated all partial aspects into a coherent whole, raises the question of the creator, bearer, and guarantor of that whole.[1718] God becomes a scientific category in the sense that he

1716 See below, Section 5 of this chapter

1717 See above, Chapter IV, Section 2 a

1718 Buddley, *Motion and Motion's God*, 197 f. In this respect, Strong is right when he writes that Newton's intention was primarily scientific (*Newton and God*, 150, 159). However, if he therefore denies the theological background of the doctrine of absolute space (*loc. cit.*, 152), he simply confuses logical and

ensures the maintenance of the world order, which is described and derived exclusively by mathematical-scientific means.[1719] But it is precisely this that Newton's religious conscience resists. Alarmed by the hubris and eager to appease his stern, Judaic-patriarchally conceived God,[1720] he undertakes a logically and empirically unjustified relaxation of natural causality, so that no doubt could arise regarding its inability to perpetuate itself—that is, to become fully autonomous. Sharing the reservations of More against the allegedly atheistic mechanism known to him, he rejects the Cartesian thesis that the world could emerge from chaos without divine intervention, even if according to laws established by God; he even revises his earlier conviction of the constancy of the quantity of motion in nature.[1721] Indeed, he maintains the view that the universe, "being once formed, it may continue by those laws for many ages," but he hastens to emphasize the necessity of divine activity for the continued maintenance of the natural order.[1722] This puts him in a highly paradoxical and dangerous position. For he thereby preserves the right of his Pantokrator to intervene in nature as *manus emendatrix*—but only at the high cost of having to assume flaws in the machine, flaws which do not arise necessarily from its purely scientific analysis.[1723] Worse still: the assumed imperfection or occasional need for repair in the machine had to suggest the idea that the creator God was incapable of producing perfection, and must instead spend eternity dealing with the defects of his own works. For Newton's God, evidently, there was no Sabbath.

Leaving aside God as a scientific-natural category in the sense described above, Newton's conception of God has two aspects: on the

genetic levels or he only has the finished Newtonian model of nature in mind and ignores the early treatise *De gravitatione et aequipondio fluidorum*, which was published only 10 years after his essay, and which we discussed above (Chapter IV, Section 2 a). The fact that Newton does not mention the theological origin of absolute space to Bentley is not a sign that it did not exist, as Strong believes, but rather that Newton wanted to avoid suspicion of Spinozism.

1719 Burtt, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 293; Westfall, *Science and Religion*, 199

1720 Manuel, *Religion of Newton*, 23, 16 ff.

1721 Kubrin, *Newton and the Cyclical Cosmos*, especially 326 f., 337, 333 f.

1722 *Opticks* III, Qu. 31 = *Opera* IV, 261 ff.

1723 Fierz, *Über den Ursprung*, 105 f., cf. 97.

one hand, he is interwoven with space and thus rather passive; on the other hand, he represents the *manus emendatrix* and is thereby active. The first aspect constitutes the theological presupposition of the mature Newtonian model of nature, while the second forms the theological supplement or moderation of that model. Leibniz opposes both aspects: in the former, he (silently) senses Spinozism,[1724] in the latter, he sees a degradation of God.[1725] We will not here reconstruct in detail the content of the famous dispute between Leibniz and Clarke.[1726] But something must be said about its argumentative style. Each side accuses the other of implicit atheism, so that the controversy stands under the sign of metaphysical considerations. Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to view this as theology in the old sense. What is characteristic of the new phase in the history of God and theology is rather that arguments are framed in relation to specific models of nature, and that each model is associated with a particular conception of God's essence. Both sides speak with enviable meticulousness about God's character, habits, and way of thinking, and about how he is free or perfect, and how he chooses one project over another. Under these circumstances, it is hard for a third party to shake the impression that God can, more or less arbitrarily, be grasped—or at least defined in essentially different ways with equally good reasons. The undoubtedly sincere piety of both sides—which compels them to relate (different) conceptions of nature always and primarily to God—thus paradoxically contributes more to the diminishing than the enhancement of divine authority. For it does not establish a basis for mutual understanding, but on the contrary, serves as the subjectively relieving and outwardly credible precondition for each side to raise the suspicion of atheism against the other. The fact that both sides allowed this suspicion (at least as the final logical consequence of the opposing position) to be presumed objectively reveals the difficult situation of piety since it had to take into account the new natural science. In intellectual history, the impending decline of an idea is often signaled by the ease with which arguments for it can be transformed into arguments against it—during which the idea in question gradually

1724 3rd and 4th letters to Clarke = *Phil. Schriften*, VII, 363 f., 376.
1725 1st and 2nd letters to Clarke = *Phil. Schriften* VII, 352, 357 f.
1726 For this, see the excellent presentation by Koyré, *Von der geschlossenen Welt*, Chapter XI, p. 211 ff.; cf. Priestley, *The Clarke-Leibniz Controversy*, 34 ff.

loses its specific content. In this light, Clarke and Leibniz rendered God a highly questionable service—not only according to each other's judgment, but also with regard to the concrete effects of their teachings in the sense of the *heterogony of ends*.[1727]

The argumentative style of the controversy between Leibniz and Clarke set a precedent precisely because the instrumentalization of God was now on the agenda. In light of the dual necessity to conduct the natural sciences according to immanent principles and to dispel the suspicion of atheism through an unambiguous and often pathos-laden —but in substance, due to the plasticity of God, otherwise non-binding —gesture, it became customary, even conventional, to play off scientific conceptions in the name of God against others that themselves had previously presented as the only firm bulwark against atheism. Thus Maupertuis sets against both the Cartesian law of the conservation of the quantity of motion and the Leibnizian law of the conservation of the quantity of force his *principe de la moindre quantité d'action*, which he considers *"digne de l'Être suprême"* and even a new proof of God—[1728]precisely because it alone is truly universal.[1729] He rejects Newton's proof of God based on the supposedly ad hoc-created regularity of the solar system with the remark that it relies merely on Newton's inability to name "*une cause physique de cette uniformité*".[1730] Yet the same Maupertuis is by no means willing to simply recognize God as the cause of all motion; after presenting the two opposing views on the matter—immanence of motion in matter and God as *primum movens*—he does not opt for the latter, but rather says that the cause of motion is unknown.[1731] It is, however, hardly coherent to reject the proof of God from the origin of motion while seeking one only in the manner in which motion or *"action"* is carried out. This reveals that the principle of the *moindre quantité d'action* is not truly intended as a new proof of God, but rather as a substantiation of the scientific thesis of the simplicity and universality of the laws of nature, by appeal to the nature of God. God's intelligence and economy differ

1727 Cf. the remarks by Gay, *Science of Freedom*, 144. On the materialistic impact of Newton and Leibniz, see above, Chapter IV, Sections 2 and 4.
1728 *Essai de cosmologie*, II[e] Part. = *Oeuvres* I, 40 ff.
1729 *op. cit.*, I[e] Part. = I, 23.
1730 *op. cit.*, I[e] Part. = I, 9.
1731 *op. cit.*, II[e] Part. = I, 26 ff.

only in degree and intensity from the corresponding qualities of a good mechanic. God is thus instrumentalized precisely at the moment when the world appears in his hands as a machine-like instrument.

Now, however, in Maupertuis we also find another version of the scientific-natural instrumentalization of God, which we must pay special attention to. This time, the aim is to legitimize through God precisely those conceptions that were regarded by adherents of traditional theology as extremely dangerous to God—and by materialists, in fact, as foundational. A clear sign of the flexible treatment of the concept of God according to the respective aim can be seen in the fact that in this case, God's will and power come to the fore, whereas his rationality and wisdom were emphasized above all when, as we just saw, the theological underpinning of natural law or causality was at stake. As a command of divine will, the immanence of gravitational attraction in matter would be entirely possible for Maupertuis. Since our finite understanding cannot grasp the essence of bodies, we must assume that matter could possess such a property—if only God willed it.[1732] Likewise, as a good theologian, Maupertuis defends epigenesis, which was no less a thorn in the side of traditionalists. To their argument that God had created everything in a single day, he replies that for God, everything is simultaneous that appears to us as successive, and thus from his perspective there is no difference between epigenesis and preexistence.[1733] As one can see, the instrumentalization of God required considerable casuistic effort, and it was willingly and abundantly undertaken. Significantly, the devout Catholic Needham—a pioneer of the theory of epigenesis—had already sought to place it under the aegis of God.[1734] Voltaire, who feared the atheistic consequences of the new biology, criticized Needham for this,[1735] but he himself—in regard to a question just as central—invoked God to make palatable what would scandalize the pious. Matter could also think, he assures—why not, if the almighty God so willed it?[1736] How common this style of argument was among

1732 *Disc. sur la figure des astres* §IX = *Oeuvres* I, 161, 169.
1733 *Venus*, XII = *Oeuvres* II, 68
1734 Roger, *Sciences de la vie*, 513.
1735 *op. cit.*, 511, 731 ff., 741.
1736 *Élém. de phil. de Newton* I, 6 = *OC*, XXI, 422 ff.; *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Matière* = *OC*, XX, 50; Letter to P. Tournemine from the year 1735 = *OC*, XXXIII, 518.

those leading Enlighteners who took great care to dispel any suspicion of atheism should be made clearer by recalling that Voltaire here is merely repeating Locke, who had considered the possibility that "God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking".[1737]

The instrumentalization of God thus reached its seemingly paradoxical peak when God was tasked, by means of his own omnipotence, with abolishing himself: for nothing else was signified by the attribution of motion, transformation, and eventually even thought to matter—it marked the beginning of the end of God. Now, the instrumentalization of God was in fact as old as God himself; that is, the "almighty" God had always been an instrument in the hands of "weak" men who sought to justify or defend their own claims to power through him. The decisive difference between earlier instrumentalizations of God and the present one, however, lies in the fact that before the ontological rehabilitation of sensibility, one conception of God could replace another without the idea of God *as such* having to suffer—especially since there existed no alternative ontological-worldview framework. But now that such a framework exists (in the form of Nature) and competes with the old one, the instrumentalization of God must prove fatal to him: for it is now carried out in reference to the new worldview that competes with him —i.e., every conception of God now appears more or less under the sign of the respective conception of nature. It is, therefore, only consistent to eventually demand from God himself the endowment of nature with his own ontological predicates, or even to assign God the task of abolishing himself. Even if it does not go that far, the instrumentalization of God in the light of the new ideological posture contributes decisively to his loss of specific and binding characteristics (as they appear from the perspective of his former representatives). He is degraded precisely at the moment when both friend and foe (defined by traditional criteria) claim him for themselves. To the superficial observer, this may appear as proof of his still unbroken power—but his power now barely suffices to maintain the old association between atheism and the suspicion of nihilism. Seen in this way, the invocation of God by all sides is merely the reverse side of his disintegration under conditions where suspicion of atheism and suspicion of nihilism still largely coincide—that is, under the

1737 *Essay* IV, 3, § 6 (= II, 193).

conditions of a worldview *interregnum*. The major controversies still revolve primarily around the *definition* of God, and only secondarily around his *existence*. God is defined in reference to specific goals (and these goals are then, in turn, derived anew from the essence of this so-defined God—now with ontological radiance). And in his infinite goodness, he disappoints no one who calls upon him: he stands on all sides simultaneously, just as in wartime he refuses no belligerent his blessing for their righteous cause. Or, God resembles a senile old man with dulled senses, cunningly manipulated by his servants—for his own good, as the most devoted among them believe. But since God is now assigned several conflicting positions, it ultimately becomes indifferent which of them one chooses, so that God can no longer guarantee the One Truth and the One Morality. As a fighter against theology's claim to possess the One Truth and Morality, Voltaire was pleased with this: *"Heureusement, quelque système qu'on embrasse, aucun ne nuit à la morale: car qu'importe que la matière soit faite ou arrangée?*[1738]*"*. *In the murky situation resulting from the instrumentalization of God, however, one could just as easily side with Maupertuis and assume the exact opposite: namely, that one could derive atheistic-nihilistic conclusions* (*"conséquences terribles"*) from any *"hypothèse philosophique"*—if one only wished to.[1739]

3. Between Impulse and Reason. The Dilemma of Moral Philosophy

1738 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Matière* = *OC*, XX, 53.

1739 *Reponse aux Objections de Diderot* = *Oeuvres* II, 197.

a) General Remarks

The conflict between the causal and the normative appears in structurally similar form in the domain of moral philosophy and anthropology. For reason and impulse in man generally relate to one another as God and matter in the cosmos. To the extent that God is made autonomous in relation to nature, human reason is likewise made sovereign over biopsychic sensibility. In both cases, the preservation of the normative is intended, yet in both cases the Enlightenment also does not (or not entirely) want to relinquish the rehabilitation of sensibility; thus, reason is de-intellectualized in the same sense and fused with the deeper existential layers just as God is intertwined with nature (or, alternatively: reason guarantees the regular functioning of an innate moral causality in human nature in the same way God does for natural causality). Such problems of mediation, however, only arise once nature has been ontologically elevated and the thesis taken seriously that man is nature. Despite all the difficulties of mediation, this thesis—like the also fraught elevation of nature itself, for as long as God was not yet dead—could not be abandoned. The same Enlighteners who cared deeply about the elevation of man through liberation from superstition and despotism, and who envisioned his dominion over nature through science and technology, were also constantly forced to degrade him through the reminder of his extensive—or even merely—naturalness. Their dream of man often could not be reconciled with their assessment of him.[1740] The polemic against theology made this ambiguity unavoidable. To begin with, man had to be fully integrated into the new worldview framework; for a comprehensive ontological elevation of nature could not take place as long as man remained primarily the image of God. The externally impressive elevation of man through his resemblance to God thus had dangerous ontological consequences, which were also accompanied by moral-philosophical discomforts. For the reverse side of likeness to God was original sin—that is, man had to follow the entire path laid out by God if he wanted from the outset to place himself under his aegis. Now, since the doctrine of original sin formed the ideological foundation of Christian-ascetic morality, the

1740 Crocker, *Age of Crisis*, 78; cf. below, Section 5 of this chapter.

Enlightenment, in order to oppose the latter, had to reject the Christian anthropological concept in its entirety (at least so long as materialism and nihilism did not threaten directly);[1741] that is, it had to conceive of man as nature and cling to this conception all the more firmly the more intense the struggle against asceticism—or against whatever was understood by it at any given time—became. Without doubt, this struggle constitutes a fundamental aspect of the Enlightenment. It is no coincidence that among its adherents, engagement with the question of happiness became a kind of "obsession," in which the well-being of the body played no small role in the new conception of happiness.[1742] Under the pressure of the zeitgeist, even theologians moderated their tone; they no longer spoke of self-discipline and self-denial, but instead of "true" or spiritually Christian happiness as the goal of man. Nonetheless, early efforts to reconcile Christian and secular morality ultimately gave way—especially in France after 1740—to hardened opposition between the camps.[1743] In the demand for happiness lies the need for self-determination, for personal shaping of one's destiny independently of any authority. If we consider this essential aspect of anti-ascetic morality, it will not surprise us that the Enlightenment, alongside the demand for happiness, also raised that for the right to suicide.[1744] Both belong together—if not logically, then at least polemically. Together, they oppose the Christian assumption that human life does not belong to man but to God, who alone may determine it by his commandments and who alone may give or take it.

The enforcement of the thesis of the fundamental naturalness of man is vividly reflected in the almost universal rejection of the sharp Cartesian separation between human and animal.[1745] This was, however, to be expected within the Enlightenment's tendency toward the interweaving of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, as already implied by Spinoza's position on the matter.[1746] Bayle, with his characteristic

1741 Regarding the occasional convergence between the Christian concept of human elevation (being made in the image of God) and moderate Enlightenment thought, we discussed this above in Chapter IV, Section 4b.

1742 Mauzi, *Idée du Bonheur*, 80, 300 ff.

1743 *Op. cit.*, 398 ff., 180 ff.

1744 100 Crodter, *Discussion of Suicide*, especially 53 ff., 62 ff.

1745 Besides Rosenfield's work, see Shugg, *Cartesian Beast-Machine*, 279 ff.

1746 *Ethics*, III, Prop. LVII, Scholium = *Opera* II, 187.

directness, made the alternatives clear: either one remains with the Cartesian distinction and thereby saves the soul and its immortality, or one questions it and becomes entangled (scholastics not excepted) in insoluble difficulties—unless one simply gives up the immortal soul.[1747] The sharpness of the alternative, however, did not prevent the leading Enlighteners from emphatically rejecting the Cartesian position in the interest of proving man's naturalness. All their arguments are found in Condillac's *Traité des Animaux*,[1748] so that a reconstruction of them is unnecessary here. What is worth emphasizing is that the arguments have not only a biological-anthropological aspect but also an epistemological one, which—due to its empiricist character—is hardly separable from the former. In the investigation of whether animals have a soul similar to that of humans, Locke's dissolution of the Cartesian identity of soul and thinking is presupposed; only if soul is not identical with thinking can it be attributed (in a functional sense) to animals. This connection was already known to Voltaire before Condillac. He refers to Locke's separation of soul and thinking (and also brings in the possible thinking capacity of matter) precisely in support of his conviction that animals feel just as humans do, and only a "ridiculous vanity" creates the impression of an essential difference between animal and human soul.[1749] Maupertuis likewise wishes to refute the thesis that animals possess a *"âme sensitive"* but not a *"âme pensante"* by means of his epistemological empiricism. "*Tout sentiment, toute perception est une pensée*," he says, and thus the distinction between the two types of soul becomes invalid *a limine*.[1750] The claim that mind arises from the senses is, however, essentially just a component of the broader conception of man's naturalness, and it is therefore no surprise that it became controversial especially in moral-philosophical terms.[1751]

1747 *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Article Rorarius, Remarks C, E, F = III, 2473 f., 2476–78. Bayle's reference to Rorarius illustrates the extent to which the Enlightenment was marked by questions already raised in the early phase of modern rationalism; cf. above, Chapter II, Section 3b.

1748 See especially *Seconde Partie*, Chapters I–II = *Oeuvres* I, 356A–358B.

1749 *Traité de Métaphysique*, V = *OC* XXII, 211 f.

1750 Letter V (*Sur l'âme des bêtes*) = *Oeuvres* II, 246 f.

1751 Cf. above, Chapter V, Section 3a.

Opponents of empiricist epistemology, such as Bonnet,[1752] saw in the resulting devaluation of the intellect just as great a threat to free will as in the joint subsumption of human and animal under the umbrella of naturalness. And indeed, a radical empiricist like Hume claimed that free will—as causally understood influence of objects by the mind—was a deception in the same way that causality between objects is a deception, only to soon afterward describe "experimental reason, on which the whole conduct of life depends," as a common property of humans and animals.[1753]

The thesis of the naturalness of man—indispensable on the one hand for the completion and consolidation of the new ontological-worldview framework, and on the other for the fight against asceticism—had in turn to impair free will, and thus the capacity for moral action, to the extent that the exclusion of divine arbitrariness required a causal conception of nature and of man. The conflict between the causal and the normative in Enlightenment moral philosophy thus arises from the attempt to satisfy two polemical needs at once. In doing so, logical weaknesses could be tolerated more readily than an explicit admission of determinism, which could have turned the suspicion of nihilism into a certainty. For the logical interdependence of determinism and moral relativism on both the individual and social level was clear to all sides, and it was also well known that libertines were accustomed to justify the transgression of prevailing norms deterministically—that is, as the determination of human behavior by deeply rooted drives against which free will could ultimately do nothing.[1754] But the bourgeois carriers and supporters of the Enlightenment movement in particular could make no concessions to libertinism, and it was especially from their ranks that much of the edifying literature originated, aimed at proving that the libertine was

1752 *Essai analytique*, XI = p. 96 ff. (on the activity of the soul in sensation); XVI = p. 182 (on the connection between thinking ability and freedom); XII = pp. 114 ff. (especially 122 f.), XIX = pp. 277 ff. (against the phenomenalist definition of freedom by Condillac and Locke); XVI = pp. 178 ff. and XXIV = pp. 462 ff. (differences between humans and animals).

1753 109 *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, VIII and IX = *Essays* II, 75 f., 88.

1754 See below, Chapter VII, Section 3.

"in truth" simply unhappy.[1755] Voltaire thus summed up a prevailing and also tactically expedient opinion when he wrote to Helvétius: *"le bien de la société exige que l'homme se croie libre"*, adding that he would reject fatalism even if it were true.[1756] Yet the safeguarding of free will required a dilution or at least a reinterpretation of the naturalness of man, which, thanks to the ambiguity of the concept of nature, was not particularly difficult (even intellectually oriented moral philosophers like Wollaston wished to remain within the general bounds of following nature, though they advised extreme caution in regard to the "animal" part of human nature).[1757] The problem now becomes that of showing that the naturalness of man, if only "rightly" interpreted, does not result in a danger, but on the contrary forms the only firm foundation for "true" (i.e., non-ascetic, non-authoritarian) morality; nature's capacity to ground morality is thus to render theological justifications superfluous once and for all. As in the case of God, the task here too is to place in the service of one's own position precisely that which appears to be its greatest threat. In that case, the danger came from theology; this time, nihilism is at the door. Reinterpretations were necessary in both cases, because the normativist Enlightenment could not dispense with (instrumentalized) God due to the suspicion of nihilism, nor with the (differently understood than by the nihilists) naturalness of man due to its battle against the God of the theologians.

b) The Paradigmatic Character of the British Moral-Philosophical Debate

The British moral-philosophical debate, which begins with Hobbes and the Platonists and concludes more than a hundred years later with Bentham, is paradigmatic in two respects. In purely formal

1755 Mauzi, *Idée du Bonheur*, 34 f., 269 ff.
1756 Letter dated September 11, 1739 = *OC* XXXIV, 577. It is known that Voltaire later adopted a different position, aligning himself with Locke and Collins (see especially *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Articles *Franc Arbitre* and *Liberté* = *OC* XIX, 196 ff., 578 ff.); nevertheless, the cited statement remains largely representative of normative Enlightenment thought.
1757 *Religion of Nature*, 22 f.

terms, it can be said that this is a set of positions formed through the rearrangement or reordering of given fixed elements for the sake of a particular effect. In other words: the given elements (drive or sensibility and intellect, innate and acquired, self-love and love of neighbor, etc.) constitute the conceptual axes of the debate and are combined in accordance with the respective fundamental stance or decision, producing structures that can be set in opposition to others. Since the fundamental elements are given, the number of their possible basic combinations remains limited, despite the variety in particulars. It also happens that divergent or opposing fundamental positions are represented through combinations that are structurally similar (this similarity arises from the attempt to absorb and thereby neutralize the opponent's arguments) and differ only in their sign: what is "good" for one is "bad" for the other; here we have a negative concordance, which brings the decisive difference in fundamental attitude into even clearer relief. (This schema applies, as mentioned at the outset, also to the Enlightenment as a multidimensional whole.)[1758] — In terms of content, the debate is paradigmatic again in the way that ontological and epistemological perspectives are directly integrated into the narrower moral-philosophical confrontation. This underscores the fundamental fact that all levels of thought structurally form a whole, which itself rests on a single fundamental stance. In view of this conscious and systematic versatility, one may venture the judgment that the moral-philosophical debate in Britain was conducted at a philosophical level (in the technical sense of the term) which finds no equal in France and was only reached in Germany with Kant.

Locke forms the appropriate starting point for presenting the British moral-philosophical debate both in its continuity and in its turn toward specifically Enlightenment questions. On the one hand, he

1758 The decisive role of the purposeful combination of available conceptual elements, shaped by the prevailing fundamental attitude, in forming the intellectual character of a particular era is well illustrated by Stephen's summary of British philosophy in the 18th century: "Locke, though attacking the Cartesian philosophy, was a theologian and a sincere if latitudinarian Christian; Berkeley assaulted the older philosophy expressly and most sincerely and passionately in the interests of theology; Hume argued that the premises admitted by Locke and Berkeley led to conclusions irreconcilable with their theology; and Reid—so far agreeing with Hume—attacked their premises in order to support their conclusions" (*English Thought*, 21 f.).

continues the confrontation between the Platonists and Hobbes—not by siding with one against the other, but by adopting and processing important conceptual motifs from both—more or less tacitly. Since these, however, are logically incompatible, the old controversy continues within his own work, now in the form of a theoretical wavering. On the other hand, Locke shifts the level of the debate through his epistemological orientation, such that his moral-philosophical position cannot be fully understood merely by reducing it to the two aforementioned predecessors in intellectual history, but only against the background of his epistemology. In other words: Locke's moral-philosophical dualism is at least as closely tied to the dualistic character of his epistemology as it is to the contradictions of the intellectual influences upon him—though the latter also seem not to be unrelated to the ambivalence of Locke's epistemology.[1759] Before turning to the structural relationship between epistemology and moral philosophy in Locke, we should recall that even his epistemological empiricism rests on certain presuppositions—namely, it arises from the ontological elevation of sensibility. Only within the framework of thought created by that elevation do questions such as whether matter can think (a question which Locke tends, with all necessary caution, to answer affirmatively)[1760] become meaningful and even possible. Belonging to the same ontological stance is also—even if of Morean origin—the interweaving of space and time with God,[1761] as well as the rejection of the Cartesian identification of soul and thought, and the decisive promotion of biopsychic sensibility that results from it.[1762] Given these clear substantive positions, it would be naïve to take Locke's avowal at face value when he says that he merely wishes to

1759 Hertling has convincingly traced the rationalist or intellectualist tendency in Locke's *Essay* to the influence of the Platonists; see *Locke und die Schule von Cambridge*, especially 212 ff. (epistemological influence) and 169 ff. (theological). However, it is incorrect when Hertling claims that Locke's attitude toward Hobbes was more or less that of the Platonists (266 ff.). As Lamprecht rightly notes, Hobbes' influence on Locke is "almost altogether internal, but none the less certain" (*Moral and Political Philosophy of Locke*, 30 ff., 89 ff.). This will be discussed shortly.

1760 *Essay*, IV, 3 § 6 (= II, 191 ff.).

1761 *Op. cit.*, II, 15 § 3 (= I, 259). The materiality of God is considered possible in IV, 10 § 13 (= II, 316).

1762 See above, Chapter V, Section 3b.

examine the operations of the human mind and, regarding the essence of things, is content with a "*quiet ignorance*".[1763] If one were to consistently adhere to that, one would have to remain silent. Locke's statement is better understood in its polemical sense—that is, as an a limine exclusion of the entire domain of traditional theological metaphysics.

Locke's epistemological dualism is already clearly expressed in an early work. *Ratio* and *sensus* are dependent on one another, we read there: "*si alterutram tollas, altera certe frustra est*".[1764] Also in the *Essay*, Locke consistently endeavors to place alongside what is sensibly given something that in fact cannot originate from the senses—although its awakening into activity absolutely depends on the materials and stimuli of the senses.[1765] Experience may be the sole source of knowledge—yet experience itself arises from two sources, namely *sensation* and *reflection*.[1766] Simple ideas arise simultaneously with perception[1767] and all come from things—but the mind can, starting from them, "by its own power" form complex ideas, "which it never received so united".[1768] Simple ideas are real because they correspond directly with the reality of things—[1769]but complex ideas (substances excepted) are no less real, even though their reality lies not in their relation to things but in their contradiction-free combination, which is in turn a free product of the mind.[1770] Thus, the empiricist starting point transforms into the thesis that our knowledge ultimately relates only to our own ideas—the mind knows things only through its ideas of them.[1771] This double strand in Locke's argumentation is reflected in the ambivalent meaning of his concept of *idea* (idea is sometimes the object, sometimes the instrument of the mind),[1772] and in the ambivalence of his concept of *mind* (sometimes the mind contains the

1763 *Essay*, Introduction § 4 (= I, 28).
1764 *Essays on the Law of Nature*, IV = p. 146.
1765 *Essay*, II, 2 § 2 (= I, 145 f.).
1766 *Op. cit.*, II, 1 §§ 2–4 (= I, 121 ff.).
1767 *Op. cit.*, II, 1 § 9 (= I, 127).
1768 *Op. cit.*, II, 12 § 2 (= I, 215).
1769 *Op. cit.*, II, 30 § 2 (= I, 498).
1770 *Op. cit.*, IV, 4 § 5 (= II, 230 f.).
1771 *Op. cit.*, IV, 1 § 1 and 4 § 3 (= II, 176 ff., 228).
1772 Lamprecht, *Moral and Political Philosophy of Locke*, 54 ff.

ideas, sometimes it perceives them).[1773]

As an example of a "not only certain, but real" knowledge that arises from contradiction-free combination of ideas, Locke cites mathematics,[1774] and he further claims that morality is capable of just as certain a foundation.[1775] This, however, was a desideratum of the intellectualists, realizable only on the basis of their assumption of a reason that was both innate and bound to particular contents. But it is precisely this presupposition that is lacking in Locke, for whom reason, though it forms one of the *natural abilities* or *faculties*, initially stands devoid of any content, since Locke's elimination of innate ideas entails the abolition of all innate contents or "innate principles".[1776] That side of Locke's thinking which may be described as intellectualist (albeit only in the sense that Locke assumes a self-activity of the mind) is, in its character, conditioned by the other, the empiricist side. Therefore, the certain knowledge gained through contradiction-free combination of ideas must remain within the framework prescribed by the nominalist-phenomenalist approach. Since real and nominal essences coincide only in simple ideas and (simple) modes, but are always distinct in the case of substances,[1777] and since mixed modes, like substances, are complex ideas that arise from the combination of different simple ideas through an *act of mind*, to which a name is then assigned,[1778] moral ideas too—which are also mixed modes, i.e., "a

1773 Aaron, *Locke*, 106 f.
1774 *Essay*, IV, 4 § 6 (= II, 231 f.).
1775 *Op. cit.*, IV, 12 § 8 (= II, 347).
1776 *Op. cit.*, I, 3 S 12 (= I, 102 f.).
1777 *Op. cit.*, 111, 3 S 18 (= II, 28 f.).
1778 *Op. cit.*, II, 22 §§ 1 u. 4; II, 23 § 6 (= I, 381, 383, 396).
The nominalist-phenomenalist approach of Locke is obviously indebted to Hobbes and therefore raises the same aporias: namely, what guarantees that the formal construct of reality produced by an "arbitrary" combination of signs corresponds to reality? Locke must either strictly restrict knowledge to the combination of ideas (and thus ultimately concede Berkeley's point) or give up his polemic against substances. Since the (according to Locke fictive) concept of substance arises formally in the same way as the mixed modes, Locke is forced to name real existence as the only criterion of distinction between the two (III, 5 § 3 = II, 44; cf. IV, 4 § 2 = II, 227 f.)—thus falling back on the senses, thereby depriving his conception of knowledge as idea-combination of any essential content.

voluntary collection of ideas"—[1779] can only be "ingenerable and incorruptible" in a purely formal sense: for this applies to all mixed modes or all "abstract" ideas to which names are attached.[1780] On the basis of the nominalist approach, then, one can only show that logically coherent moral conceptions are possible—but not what they should prescribe in terms of content. Morality remains formal, and furthermore, it remains unclear how the idea of moral obligation is to be introduced into the ensemble of a mixed mode of ideas,[1781] especially since the "*action of mind*" is supposed to be limited to the (free) combination of simple ideas or perceptions, but cannot produce new ideas.[1782]

The ideal of an eternal morality had to take on an entirely different meaning in Locke's epistemological framework than it did for the intellectualists, even though it was precisely the intellectualist elements in Locke's own thinking (*action of the mind*) that made the announcement of such an ideal possible in the first place. However, the rejection of innate ideas did not allow going beyond that, since it was precisely aimed at proving the defenders' claims to binding substantive determination of such ideas to be empty. Indeed, Locke rejected innate ideas not least for polemical reasons—that is, with regard to their social function. A certain party had put this doctrine into circulation in order to consolidate its own authority by presenting its own positions as *innate principles* and thereby forbidding people the use of their reason.[1783] Now, since in his rejection of innate principles Locke had particularly emphasized the relativity of custom and convention depending on place and time,[1784] while at the same time

1779 *Op. cit.*, III, 5 § 5 (= II, 45).
1780 *Op. cit.*, III, 3 § 19 (= II, 29 f.).
1781 Lamprecht, *Moral and Polit. Philos. of Locke*, 78 f.
1782 *Essay*, II, 2 § 2 (= I, 145 f.).
1783 *Op. cit.*, I, 3 § 25 (= I, 116). In the course of the usual simplification or vulgarization of the opponent's position or of the nature of "scholasticism," intended to ease its refutation, Locke overlooks—or rather ignores—the actual scholastic conceptions regarding the question of innate ideas, which only underscores the polemical character of his own theses. Ironically, the term *tabula rasa*, which Locke himself alludes to ("white paper, void of all characters", II, 1 § 2 = I, 121), is of scholastic origin (*Baeumker, Zur Vorgeschichte zweier Lockescher Begriffe*, 297 f.).
1784 *Op. cit.*, I, 2 §§ 8–9 and 3 §§ 8–9 = I, 71 ff., 95 ff.

his eternal morality remained rather meager, the moral-philosophical question arose for him in all its sharpness. Given the aforementioned conditioning of the intellectualist component of his thinking by his own nominalism, he had to pose this question on an empiricist basis—that is, ground morality in empirically definable simple givens (as moral-philosophical counterparts to *simple ideas*). The interweaving of the sensibly natural and the moral begins on the elementary existential level, namely through the fundamental linking of good and evil to the feelings of pleasure and pain.[1785] Nonetheless, for Locke, moral good is not merely a further development of physical good, which could have occurred even without the mediation of other factors. On the contrary: "*Principles of actions, indeed, there are lodged in men's appetites; but these are so far from being innate moral principles, that, if they were left to their full swing, they would carry men to the overturning of all morality. Moral laws are sent as a curb and restraint to these exorbitant desires etc.*[1786]" As the counterexample of Shaftesbury implies, what Locke lacked for establishing a morality based solely on natural predispositions was the radically optimistic anthropology within a similarly conceived ontology. In order to inhibit destructive outbursts of human nature, rewards and punishments are therefore necessary:[1787] thus, immediate pleasure can be sacrificed in favor of a later but greater one, without the principle of pleasure itself being violated. Laws and public opinion establish moral rules—that is, they create morality by rewarding and punishing.[1788] In this view, morality appears as the product of a positing; moral concepts emerge only alongside social institutions: "*where there is no property there is no injustice*".[1789] This thesis appears almost verbatim in Hobbes[1790] and clearly shows that in attempting an empiricist grounding of morality, Locke had to draw very close to Hobbes. Their shared nominalist starting point, in fact, made this convergence—across the entire line of argument—unavoidable. For Locke, just like Hobbes, believed that

1785 *Op. cit.*, II, 20 § 2 (= I, 303).
1786 *Op. cit.*, I, 2 § 13 (= I, 77).
1787 *Op. cit.*, II, 28 § 5 (= I, 474).
1788 *Op. cit.*, II, 28 §§ 9–10 (= I, 476 f.).
1789 *Op. cit.*, IV, 3 § 18 (= II, 208).
1790 *Leviathan* XV = *EW*, III, 131.

truth consists in the correct joining or separation of words and signs,[1791] and he likewise held that concepts like good and evil can only ever be defined in relation to humans and not in themselves, so that the universally valid highest good cannot be a motive for the will;[1792] in his wake, he also defines (nominalist-phenomenalist) freedom as the absence of external obstacles, such that freedom by definition has nothing to do with the will.[1793] The proximity to Hobbes also becomes evident negatively. For Locke can name no morally binding content—neither on the basis of the criterion of pleasure and pain, nor by appeal to social factors; the empiricist side of his thinking, no more than the intellectualist one, is able to establish a universally valid specification of the *what*, beyond the necessity of the *that*. We know that Hobbes, both as an empiricist-decisionist and as a normative-intellectualist theorist of the *Law of Nature*, struggled with the same difficulties.[1794]

The desire to distance himself as clearly as possible from Hobbes evidently motivated certain additions in the second edition of the *Essay*, which are characteristic both of Locke's theoretical embarrassment and of the internal logic of his conceptual structures. The Achilles' heel of the *Essay* lies in the assumption of an instance that is not sensibly given but rather freely combines the material of the senses—i.e., the simple ideas—even though it itself remains obscure; its functions are largely recognizable, but its essence is not—and the very possibility of its existence, despite all empiricism, is hardly made comprehensible. (We have already said that for this reason moralistic assertions can only claim general validity in the nominalist sense.) Now in the second edition of the *Essay*, the remark appears that in every sensation, one perceives not only material beings, but also—and with even greater certainty—"*that there is some spiritual being within me that sees and hears*".[1795] The addition is brief and in no way serves as the starting point for a more detailed discussion of this delicate point, so that one can hardly resist the impression that Locke merely intended a general strengthening of the intellectual side of his

1791 *Essay* IV, 5 § 2 (= II, 244) and *Leviathan* IV = *EW*, III, 23.
1792 *Essay* II, 21 §§ 44–45 (= I, 341 ff.) and *Leviathan* VI and XI = *EW*, III, 41, 85.
1793 *Essay* II, 21 §§ 14–27 (= I, 319 ff.) and *Leviathan* VI = *EW* III, 48 f.
1794 See above, Chapter II, Section 3 c.
1795 151 *Essay* II, 23 § 15 (= I, 406 f.)

epistemological construction. That this may have been done with an eye toward moral-philosophical concerns can be inferred from another, much more extensive addition, in which a definition of freedom is offered that is nearly the opposite of the one we already know. Freedom is now "*the power to act or not to act accordingly as the mind directs*".[1796] Locke admits to having made this addition in response to criticisms formulated in the meantime, but it appears that he did not primarily place his hopes of escaping the logical difficulties of the empiricist grounding of a universally valid morality on this strengthening of the intellect, but rather—primarily and from the outset—on God, and in two respects. On the one hand, he presents God as "*the true ground of morality*" and attributes to divine influence precisely what was, in the eyes of conservative theologians, the greatest offense—namely, the fundamental connection between social-utilitarian considerations and morality.[1797] Yet from this connection it followed that morality is a purely worldly product of a positing; by attributing this connection entirely unmediated to God, Locke believes he has protected it from Hobbesian decisionism, proceeding as casuistically here as he did in the case where he derived the possibility of thinking matter from God's omnipotence. God is, quite literally, pulled from the drawer to cover precisely those theses which could have most easily provoked the accusation of godlessness. God is also supposed to become serviceable in a second respect. By rewarding the good and punishing the wicked after death, he removes from the thesis that good and pleasure, or evil and pain, belong together, its nihilistic implications: every rational person would of course want to be virtuous, precisely in order to partake of eternal pleasure.[1798] Following the rejection of innate ideas, Locke's appeal to God had to be artificial or forced[1799] and at the same time absolutely necessary to

1796 *Op. cit*., II, 21 § 73 (= I, 367).
1797 *Op. Cit.* I, 2 § 6 (= I, 70).
1798 *Op. Cit.* II, 21 §§ 67 ff.; 28 § 8 (= I, 359 ff., 475).
1799 Also with respect to epistemology, God's position in Locke remains weak, i.e., it by no means defines his moral-philosophical functions. It is not surprising that for Locke God is not an innate idea; nevertheless, it is objectively a degradation of him that his existence cannot be grasped intuitively (as ours can), but only demonstratively (IV, 9 § 3 and 10 § 1 ff. = II, 304 ff.; the ontological proof of God is implicitly rejected in § 7).

avoid the charge of nihilism. The Cambridge Platonists were still able to establish a direct and unproblematic connection between God and man through the innate divine or moral principle: God was simply there; he didn't have to be pulled in according to the needs of the moment. Locke's God, in reality, intervenes in human affairs without mediation, and the difficulty for Locke's position becomes all the greater since, on the other hand, he agrees with the Platonists in the view that God's nature is primarily not voluntaristic but rational; God is indeed omnipotent and free, but at the same time remains "*determined by what is best*".[1800] Because Locke must instrumentalize his God, he wavers—just like other Enlightenment thinkers—between a rationalistic and a voluntaristic conception of God.[1801]

The dualism of Locke's philosophy—or what is rightly considered its logical Achilles' heel—was precisely one of the major reasons for its significant influence. The cautious leaving-open of the door to intellectualism initially made possible a distancing from amoralistic materialism, while the entire construction at the same time stood clearly in the very modern, anti-scholastic spirit of empiricism. Locke thus became the prophet of the moderates; his philosophy, however, despite all its dualism, was unsuitable for fulfilling conservative expectations. It was precisely that aspect which attracted the most attention that seemed to confirm the worst conservative fears: naturally, this concerns the question of innate principles. As Lee put it: if there are no innate moral laws, then "*there can be no Reason given why any Action whatever should be in itself really good or bad*".[1802] The use that an opponent of free will (and radical deist) like Collins made of Locke's theses,[1803] of course, had to make their consequences appear all the more grim. And if we also recall the points of objective agreement between Locke and Hobbes, then the extent of that danger becomes clear—one which already forced the first non-conservative response to Locke's implicit skepticism to appear in the guise of a radically optimistic anthropology or ontology. Its spokesperson was Shaftesbury, and the intensity of the needs he satisfied is shown by the

1800 *Op. Cit.* II, 21 § 50 (= I, 347).

1801 *Op. Cit.* Lamprecht, *Moral and Polit. Phil. of Locke*, 105.

1802 *Anti-Scepticism*, 13.

1803 *Inquiry*, 15, 41, 90 f. Collins adopts Locke's concept of freedom, as well as the linking of good and evil to pleasure and pain.

enormous popularity of his writings.[1804] Now, if Locke had adopted elements of intellectualism and rational theology from the Platonists, but decisively deviated from them by rejecting innate ideas and, in the context of a general elevation of sensibility, connected the moral phenomenon with affects and drives, then Shaftesbury proceeded as follows: he followed the Platonists on the question of innate ideas but at the same time rejected their intellectualism and made Locke's connection between morality and affect his own.[1805] Confronted with Locke's challenge, Shaftesbury saw himself compelled to deepen the ontological grounding of morality, as undertaken by the Platonists, by carrying it not merely through reference to the (intuitive) *ratio*, but through the entire scale of human faculties. Locke thus became Shaftesbury's tutor, but not his mentor.[1806]

The most modern aspect of Shaftesbury is that he does not ground morality ontologically in the style of the old metaphysics—to which the Cambridge Platonists still adhered at least partially—but instead does so through the elaboration and prioritization of an anthropology that takes into account the (anti-ascetic) rehabilitation of sensibility, which, however, stands within the cosmological framework corresponding to it. The same decided turn toward the anthropological, which is carried out in common rejection of "Scholasticism" etc., is present in both Hobbes and Shaftesbury; yet the respective fundamental decisions point in completely opposite directions. Shaftesbury does not wish to throw a hopeless, dangerous human being into a meaningless or mechanistic universe, but rather to place a good one at the center of a cosmos from whose constitution values arise effortlessly—a cosmos saturated with values. The absence of evil in Shaftesbury's world is not, as with Hobbes, merely the theoretical counterpart to the absence of good within a general meaninglessness, which in turn corresponds to the value-free or

1804 Eleven editions of the *Characteristicks* between 1711 and 1790. The complete French translation appeared in 1769 and the corresponding German one in 1776–9.

1805 Passmore, *Cudworth*, 96 ff., notes the major influence of the Platonists on Shaftesbury with justification, but errs in thinking that Shaftesbury's elevation of bio-psychical sensibility could be reconciled with the Platonists' intellectualism, specifically in view of their humanism.

1806 On Shaftesbury's critique of Locke see Uehlein, *Kosmos und Subjektivität*, 19 ff.

nominalistic view based on the insight into the artificial or constructed character of good and evil. On the contrary, it results from the omnipotence and omnipresence of the good: "*'Tis Good which is predominant; and every corruptible and mortal Nature by its Mortality and Corruption yields only to some better, and all in common to that best and highest Nature, which is incorruptible and immortal*".[1807] As this sentence implies, evil is not simply subordinate to good, but from the standpoint of the perfection of the whole, it does not exist at all: "*This Order, if indeed perfect, excludes all real Ill*".[1808] Shaftesbury employs the usual strategy of normative ontology here: in order to determine the meaning and value or significance of individual phenomena, he arranges them into a whole—which, however, embodies the sum of his own fundamental attitude, which thereby becomes the standard by which the phenomena are measured; the whole is good, therefore the individual phenomena must serve the good.

As for the derivation of the concept of a whole in general, Shaftesbury, like his other contemporaries, is indebted to natural science,[1809] even if he perhaps did not want to fully admit this and harbored deep mistrust toward mathematical procedure and abstraction. Nevertheless, the worldview of natural science by the end of the 17th century was such—or ideologically usable enough—that it could serve the most diverse intentions and perspectives. Thus Shaftesbury incorporates the concept of natural law into his concept of harmony. Nature is, for him, a living, organically conceived whole, yet at the same time it is subject to unchangeable laws (mathematical-mechanical and organic harmony thus become one, and yet a certain tension or ambiguity remains within the concept of harmony).[1810] Miracles are eliminated, and those who believe in a voluntaristic God are labeled "Daemonists".[1811] Here Shaftesbury fights against Calvinism and Cartesianism in the line of the Cambridge Platonists; and just as they do, he unhesitatingly invokes teleology (though he has nothing kind to say about Scholasticism), in order to affirm the

1807 *Characteristicks*, II, 216 f.
1808 *Op. Cit.* II, 27–4; cf. 9 f., 20 f., 364.
1809 On Shaftesbury's knowledge of contemporary natural science see Osske, *Ganzheit, Unendlichkeit und Form*, 89 ff.
1810 *Op. Cit.* 8 f.
1811 *Characteristicks*, II, 11.

existence of God—and above all, the value-laden character of the cosmos—through the purposeful order of nature; belief in this purposiveness constitutes the core of sound theism.[1812] Teleology and harmony on the one hand, as well as harmony and the whole on the other, are inseparably connected. Within the framework of general teleology, the individual serves the whole, whereby evil is eliminated. The all-encompassing harmony founded in teleology is therefore not mere being, but value; and the harmonious world is not only a model but also a direct source of value: "*For Harmony is Harmony by Nature ... So is Symmetry and Proportion founded still in Nature.*" This applies to art, but it is "*the same case, where Life and Manners are concern'd. The same Numbers, Harmony and Proportion will have place in Morals; and are discoverable in the Characters and Affections of Mankind; in which are laid the just Foundations of any Art and Science etc.*[1813]" The same conclusion is reached in the identification of beauty and truth:[1814] beauty or harmony becomes *ipso facto* the bearer of moral values; since the whole can only exist through it, the truth or value scale identical with it proves not to be a human construct but the voice of being itself: nominalism is thus decisively rejected.

Values are thus binding, even unavoidable. The value-laden constitution of the world is transferred to man by means of innate ideas. Such a "pre-conception" or "presensation" is the concept of beauty,[1815] a "natural Passion" or "Affection" is the inclination toward religion,[1816] and finally there is also the "natural sense of Right and Wrong";[1817] "moral" and "natural Conscience" are equated.[1818] Thus the moral problem is solved through an ontologically grounded optimistic anthropology. And whereas the mechanistic-nihilistic worldview of Hobbes yields the "homo homini lupus," here, in light of the teleologically conceived world-harmony, it is asserted that the natural state of man is "social Intercourse and Community";[1819] self-

1812 Ibid.
1813 *Op. Cit.* I, 353.
1814 *Op. Cit.* I, 142; II, 399, 422.
1815 *Op. Cit.* II, 412.
1816 *Op. Cit.* III, 36.
1817 *Op. Cit.* II, 41 f
1818 *Op. Cit.* II, 120.
1819 *Op. Cit.* II, 309; cf. I, 16, 310.

love is acknowledged, but at the same time interpreted such that, when it is "true" and "healthy," it must coincide with the social drive.[1820] What is decisive is that Shaftesbury, in his polemic against Hobbes, by no means reverts to intellectualist positions, as the conservatives (and not only they) did. The source of human goodness and morality is not reason asserting itself against sensibility, but inner sensibility itself; it is the drives and affects, which are good precisely because they are components of a harmoniously value-laden nature. Morality and freedom thus arise not from the suppression but from the unfolding of what is given by nature—if nature is defined in this way *a limine*. Reason need not shackle the affects, for it is itself only the purest expression of their "true" will. The highest unfolding is thus the highest completion; and since affect is pure nature, the truly rational life—namely "to live according to Nature"—is simply unrestricted and total affect, "intire Affection".[1821] It is important to stress the structural similarity of this moral-philosophical position with the epistemological one. The organ of the highest cognition is not demonstration (to say nothing of scholastic syllogistics), but "common sense" or "taste," within which several faculties cooperate; this cognition is just as multidimensional and simultaneously harmonious as the world itself, to which it refers, and since beauty and morality are ontologically rooted in this world, it follows that common sense and taste are not only capable of handling questions of knowledge, but also and primarily of moral and aesthetic questions.[1822] It is due to the very constitution of the world that epistemology, moral philosophy, and aesthetics cannot be separated from one another—neither on the level of the object nor that of the subject. This interweaving of levels and faculties corresponds, in cosmological terms, to Shaftesbury's panentheism.[1823] God permeates the world; upon this insight the proper form of religion is based. Within the framework of general divinity or goodness, there is no room for concepts such as the Fall, atonement, etc. Good man and loving God are two sides of the same coin. Punishment and reward after death are not incentives for moral action; they even contradict the immanent morality of the harmonious

1820 *Op. Cit.* I, 118 ff.
1821 *Op. Cit.* II, 113 f.
1822 *Op. Cit.* III, 161 ff.
1823 Grean, *Shaftesbury's Philosophy*, 66; Osske, *Ganzheit etc.*, 204.

world order. Religion should rather be the uplifting insight into this world order; it therefore has nothing to do with sadness and asceticism, which only lead to fanaticism (or "enthusiasm" in the worst sense, according to Shaftesbury's terminology).[1824] This religion of joy in life and freedom must ultimately turn against authority, intolerance, and the suppression of independent thinking.[1825] The ontological schema and the optimistic anthropology associated with it thus lead to a sharp rejection of positive religion: this was Shaftesbury's direct contribution to the polemic against the old worldview and the forms of domination upheld by it.[1826]

Shaftesbury combined the innate ideas of the Platonists with the rehabilitation of (inner) sensibility from Hobbes and Locke within the framework of a radically optimistic and strongly monistic approach. The opposing position arose from the combination of moral innateness with the intellect within a dualistic anthropology, which led to the thesis that only innate reason, not innate drives, could secure morality. In this way, they wished on the one hand not to deprive morality of its ontological foundation, and on the other hand to eliminate the danger that seemed to lurk in Shaftesbury's position; the formal structure he established, according to those who did not share his optimistic monism, could—with a change of signs—lead directly to the Hobbesian thesis: if the drives are not good *per definitionem* but rather evil or dangerous, then what can save morality, if not the firmness of the intellect, which remains elevated above every capricious fluctuation of sensibility? This counterposition was developed in the engagement with Shaftesbury himself,[1827] but above all in that with Hutcheson, who sought partly to systematize or theorize Shaftesbury's moral-philosophical insights and partly to supplement them.[1828]

1824 *Characteristicks*, I, 22; II, 57 f., 119 f., 278 f

1825 *Op. Cit.* I, 35, 96

1826 Despite the ambivalence of Shaftesbury's relationship to the deists (*Grean, Shaftesbury's Philosophy*, 59 ff.), the theological polemic against him was particularly harsh, not least because of his considerable influence. Theologians like Brown saw "in his Abhorrence of wicked Unbelievers" partly a tactical maneuver; his "concealed Method of Raillery" was considered even more dangerous than "open war" (*Essays on the Characteristics*, 243

1827 Brown's equation of Shaftesbury and Mandeville ("Thus one Extreme produceth another") is revealing (*Op. Cit.*, 145 f.).

1828 In addition to Shaftesbury's influence, Jensen rightly emphasized

Hutcheson was in his own way aware that his difference from Hobbes ultimately lay in the (anthropological) basic attitude, namely in the signs: a "benevolent Observer" would wish that human nature were good; the opposite, however, would be wished by a "malicious Observer" like "Mr. Hobbes".[1829] The struggle against intellectualism while simultaneously defending the moral only makes sense if one starts from a monistic and at the same time optimistic anthropology.[1830] This was in turn only possible after the anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensibility, which also underlies Hutcheson's approach in general. The anti-intellectualist stance thus lies close at hand, and in view of the firmly held moral intention, it draws upon the idea that the fate of the moral must not be left to the uncertain outcome of the battle between intellect and drive, but that the moral must be woven so deeply into the constitution of the whole human being that its victory can never be doubted. Morality and goodness must thus become fate, and therefore lie even deeper than the intellect is able to comprehend; they must even be present independently of our will, and must not be understood as achievements of rational will that could just as well fail to appear. The necessary conclusion of this view—that morality is not arduous self-overcoming, but free or "true" self-unfolding—indeed meant a break with the entire moral-philosophical tradition, especially the Christian one, which more or less rested on the principle of self-overcoming. Mandeville already attentively registered this break at the time.[1831]

All of this is implied in Hutcheson's definition of the "moral sense," which is supposed to exhibit the same features as the senses in

Locke's as well, *Hutcheson's Ethical Theory*, 39 ff.

1829 *Essay*, 238.

1830 For Hutchesan, there exists a pre-established harmony between one's own and others' interests; it is based on "some Instinct, antecedent to all Reason from interest, which influences to the Love of others," *Inquiry*, 124, 143.

1831 At a particularly striking point, it says: "The Generality of Moralists and Philosophers have hitherto agreed that there could be no Virtue without Self-Denial; but a late Author [Shaftesbury] ... is of a contrary Opinion, and imagines that Men without any Trouble of Violence upon themselves may be naturally Virtuous. He seems to require and expect Goodness in his Species, as we do a sweet Taste in Grapes and China Oranges, of which, in any of them are sour, we boldly pronounce that they are not come to that perfection that Nature is capable of" (*Fable of the Bees*, I, 323).

epistemological regard. "Sense" generally means "every Determination of our Minds to receive Ideas independently of our Wills," which, in relation to the moral sense, means: "Moral Perceptions arise in us as necessarily as any other Sensations; nor can we alter or stop them etc.[1832]" From this perspective, the claim becomes empty that reason leads man to morality, since morality is no longer a goal to be reached, but already a present reality. According to the intellectualists, reason has two functions: it motivates or justifies an action. But reason cannot motivate; the rational knowledge of the relations between things does not constitute a motive as long as there is no goal, and that is only posited by an affect or a desire: "there can therefore be no exciting Reason previous to Affection".[1833] Reason also presupposes a "Moral Sense" if it intends to justify an action morally.[1834] As with Hobbes, the precedence of affect here also leads to the view that reason has a purely instrumental character, i.e., it only finds the means for achieving the ends of the instincts.[1835] This argument, since both affect and the moral sense are assumed to be originally given to man, leads to an interweaving of the causal explanation of action with its normative justification; cause and norm, being and ought, are ultimately identified. It must be emphasized that the strong anti-intellectualist or emotion-centered current of the Enlightenment largely rests on this identification. For the "ought" no longer stands above reality as an (initially) abstractly formulated goal, but is already located within it. The conflict between abstract and concrete, thought and feeling, is decided in favor of the latter once the former drops away, since it no longer has any task to fulfill. The intellect is needed when the "ought" must first be designed abstractly as a goal to be reached, because it is not present in immediate existential reality; but the abstractions of the intellect are superfluous when "ought" and "being" are originally-existentially fused. The abstract universal is then ineffective, dead, and cold; constructions like the "infinite Good" and similar "very abstract general ideas" cannot, according to Hutcheson, explain concrete desire and pleasure; precisely because one holds fast to such abstractions to assert the

1832 *Essay*, 4.
1833 *Op. Cit.*, 216 f.
1834 *Op. Cit.*, 222.
1835 *Inquiry*, 175 f.; *System*, I, 58.

morally good, one reduces the concrete psychic life of man to factors like egoism etc.[1836] Hutcheson opposes that dualism which, through the separation of being and ought, arrives at the glorification of the latter or the abstract, and at the same time at the devaluation of the former or the concrete. And since he senses the logical connection of this dualism with dualistic anthropology, he also rejects the "many confused Harangues on this Subject" that wish to identify in man two principles of action, reason and affect—"the former in common with Angels, the latter with Brutes".[1837] This schema is ultimately projected into the deity itself; its nature contains moments that correspond to the noblest human affects and, just like in man, are supposed to serve as the driving force of the intellect.[1838]

In the eyes of the critics, as mentioned, Hutcheson was a Hobbes with optimistic signs. It was therefore natural that they sought to appropriate the arguments of those who had once opposed Hobbes in their own time, and that they drew upon the intellectualism of the Cambridge Platonists to some degree in order to counter Hutcheson.[1839] Already the first refutation, which appeared in 1728 and referred to Hutcheson's *Inquiry* of 1725, presents all the essential theses of this philosophical party—due, not least, to the aforementioned limited number of possible combinations of conceptual elements. Balguy values Hutcheson's desire to ground morality ontologically: "I am as unwilling, as our Author can be, that Virtue should be looked upon as wholly artificial".[1840] He wants the same thing, but not on the basis of instinct, whose concept and essence can never be firm and unchanging.[1841] With Hobbes in mind, he avoids binding morality to a (monistic) anthropology and instead

1836 *Essay*, 219.
1837 *Op. Cit.*, 216 f.
1838 *Op. Cit.*, 239.
1839 In the meantime, Clarke had renewed the positions of the Platonists (more in a publicistic than in a substantive sense) with his 1706 work on natural religion and revelation. His main thesis is that moral truths are just as inherent in the nature of things as mathematical or physical ones, from which their absolute binding force follows. Through these very truths, God also determines His own will (*Discourses*, esp. 45 ff.).
1840 *Foundation of Moral Goodness*, I = Selby-Bigge, II, 60.
1841 *Loc. cit.*, 61.

connects it merely to an anthropological constant that would also be found in a dualistic anthropology. This is reason, which also resides in the evildoer. Would we be ultimately incapable of morality if we lacked the affects that Hutcheson attributes to us? Balguy cannot accept that.[1842] Hutcheson's thesis would imply that animals, too, behave morally, since they act and react impulsively, and that there would be no essential difference between saints and criminals, since both equally follow their own affects.[1843] Against Hutcheson's monism, Balguy therefore sets the distinction between "moral" and "physical or natural Necessity," whereby the former is supposed to coincide with freedom;[1844] corresponding to this is the distinction between "moral" and "natural Good".[1845] Balguy's counter-position thus leads to a separation of being and ought—not, however, in order to attain scientific value-neutrality, but in order to detach the ought from that realm of being which might contaminate it, and to bind it to another, where its ontological dimension would emerge even more strongly. The ought is thus detached only from sensuous being, and since the spiritual is even regarded as the higher being, a new interweaving of being and ought occurs on the level of spirit or intellect: the moral in the human intellect remains ontologically rooted in God. This interweaving of being and ought on the level of the spirit as οὐσία corresponds to the separation of the levels of spirit and sensibility, i.e., the aforementioned distinction between being and ought, which is directed exclusively against the interweaving of the latter with sensibility. In order to replace Hutcheson's monism with an intellectually-structured being-ought-complex, Balguy—out of anthropological pessimism not least—[1846]had to insist on the dualism of spirit and sensibility. "Sensibility seems to be as distinct from the Understanding, as the Understanding is from the Will".[1847] The intellect, then, has nothing to do with biological or inner sensibility, and thus morality is defined as self-overcoming.[1848] The dualistic

1842 *Loc. cit.*, 62 f.
1843 *Loc. cit.*, 64, 73.
1844 *Loc. cit.*, 62.
1845 *Loc. cit.*, 65.
1846 *Loc. cit.*, 66 f.
1847 *Loc. cit.*, 71.
1848 *Loc. cit.*, 100.

structure is reflected, as expected, in the nature of God: God's intellect rules over his will, and therefore even he cannot will the irrational.[1849]

A few years later, Price also adopts the dualism in the described sense. Interestingly, in his case, the critique of Hutcheson's moral philosophy goes hand in hand with the critique of Locke's (and Hume's) epistemology. Although Hutcheson, unlike Locke, insists on the innate, both positions, from Price's point of view, amount to the same thing, since both deny the original preeminence of the intellect—that is, the only innate element relevant to him. Against Locke, he asserts the dualist thesis that a faculty which surveys and compares the objects of all the senses cannot itself be a sense; "sense and understanding are faculties of the soul totally different".[1850] From an empiricist epistemology such as Locke's, only a relativist or subjectivist morality could emerge, which would be understood as the product of a convention.[1851] Price sees in the empiricists the worthy descendants of the sophists,[1852] and accordingly views the renewal of Platonism as a suitable antidote.[1853] He therefore calls on Cudworth against Locke,[1854] and opposes the relativism of empiricism with the firmness of the idea. Only the intellect, therefore, is capable of accessing the concepts of good and evil, which are not nominalistically graspable conventions but "real characters of actions.[1855]" As with Balguy, so too with Price, the dualism of intellect and sensibility is merely the reverse side of the interweaving of being and ought on the level of intellectual purity. Both currents—Shaftesbury-Hutcheson on the one hand, and Balguy-Price on the other—thus advocate the interweaving of being and ought, or the ontological grounding of morality, only that they achieve this on different levels and by means of different combinations of the basic conceptual elements. The most modern direction, however, was the one that more or less took the rehabilitation of sensibility into account; yet in the ontological grounding of morality there was a

1849 *Loc. cit.*, 72.
1850 *Review*, 18, 21.
1851 *Op. cit.*, 61 f.
1852 *Op. cit.*, 43 note.
1853 On Price's relationships to the Cambridge Platonists see Passmore, *Cudworth*, 103 ff.
1854 *Review*, 20 note.
1855 *Op. cit.*, 66 f.

shared basis, which was created in the common resistance to nihilism. This basis underlies various attempts at mediation aimed at softening the opposition between reason and drive—that is, to avoid both the degradation of reason to a mere instrument of the drive and the already old-fashioned condemnation of sensibility. "Healthy" modernity and "healthy" tradition, or "true" Christianity and "well-understood" secularism, were to be brought into harmony. Why such attempts at mediation are natural—and popular—during transitional periods needs no special explanation.

Butler's attempt at mediation has paradigmatic significance, for it represents that logically unclear dualism which characterizes the at least quantitatively dominant current of the Enlightenment, and which not infrequently results from a fusion of empiricism of Lockean provenance with the conception of an innate moral principle. Therefore, it is a futile endeavor to try to classify Butler within the "intellectualist" or "empiricist" school. His aim and strategy consist precisely in combining—or, where possible, blending—the rational and the instinctual on multiple levels and in differing ways, such that any overgrowth of the one can be warded off at any time by appealing to the other. Since this strategy entails a plasticity of fundamental concepts that often shades into vagueness, one must not confuse the rhetorical clarity and elegance of Butler's language with logical rigor. And indeed, his goal is not logical closure based on unambiguous definitions at all costs, but rather to find a way out of the awkward position into which the skeptical implications of empiricism had led. For the same reason, many of his contemporaries perceived the harmonious equilibrium of the heterogeneous factors cooperating in the moral phenomenon—as painted by Butler in bright colors—as a logically satisfying solution to the problem of moral philosophy, though they thereby fell victim to an optical illusion. Due to the aforementioned great significance in intellectual history of the mediating attempt represented by Butler, it is worth examining the entanglements of his argumentative threads a bit more closely.

Significantly, Butler, in choosing the empiricist method, does not condemn intellectualism as such, but rather says that both approaches "lead us to the same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue; and thus they exceedingly strengthen and enforce one another".[1856] This is

1856 *Sermons*, Preface § 12 = p. 4.

not merely a gesture of courtesy toward his friend Clarke. For Butler, empiricism means precisely the analysis of human nature, in contrast to the "abstract relations of things," and he adds that only the "real nature" of man is morally and normatively relevant.[1857] Through the distinction between being and appearance—drawn by both intellectualists and empiricists combating skepticism—factors are excluded from the outset which could have proven dangerous to the formulation and realization of the moral ought. Only in light of the purified, real nature—alleged, against Hobbes, to be kind and sociable —[1858]may one say that man is "by his nature a law to himself".[1859] The normative function of this distinction emerges in Butler's statement that it is precisely our real nature which allows the influence of "reflection and conscience" on our behavior.[1860] Now since Butler does not want to restrict the morally relevant real nature to the intellect, he connects his choice of the empirical method with the substantive position of a general elevation of sensibility. "Appetites, passions and affections" are, in themselves, innocent and useful,[1861] provided they serve their "natural" purpose[1862] and do not exceed their "just proportion" within the hierarchy of faculties.[1863] By portraying human nature as a multidimensional and at the same time hierarchically structured unity, Butler avoids making the distinction between real and apparent human nature so sharp that only the intellect would remain as real nature. At the same time, by appealing to "just proportion," he keeps the door open to a selective procedure. This is connected to the fact that he does not precisely define the concepts of appetite, passion, and affection, yet tends to conflate the latter two and thus contrast them with the former—that is, with the "animal" part of man.[1864] The concept of sensibility is thus ennobled or spiritualized a limine, or worked over in the sense of "real nature." Yet even this precaution seems not to fully reassure Butler, as his

1857 *Op. cit.*, II § 10 = p. 31.
1858 *Op. cit.*, III § 1 = pp. 34 f.
1859 *Op. cit.*, III § 6 = p. 37.
1860 *Op. cit.*, II § 15 = p. 33.
1861 *Op. cit.*, V § 3 = p. 52.
1862 *Op. cit.*, IV § 7 = p. 43.
1863 *Op. cit.*, VI § 9 = p. 61.
1864 Duncan-Jones, *Butler's Moral Philosophy*, 45

position on Shaftesbury shows. The latter may have demonstrated the identity of virtue and self-love or happiness "beyond all contradiction"—but how could he have saved morality if a skeptic were simply to deny that identity? Butler believes only the thesis of the "natural authority of the principle of reflection" could provide a remedy.[1865] But since man is not to be split in two, the question arises as to the internal relations between reflection (or reason, or conscience—the terms are used synonymously) and the higher, "general" affections (namely, self-love and benevolence),[1866] as well as the relationship between these latter to each other.

In response to this critical question, Butler—in line with his strategy of mediation—provides, in various places, all conceivable answers.[1867] Given his fundamental agreement with Shaftesbury, he is initially interested in avoiding overly frequent and drastic interventions of reflection, namely in presenting morality as much as possible as the product of an autonomous effect of the affections; hence the important role of self-love in restraining the passions—a restraint which can be effected just as well by self-love as by "moral considerations".[1868] When Butler says that passions could in turn triumph over self-love,[1869] he implies that he assigns self-love to the "real nature" of man, and thus expects it to achieve normative effects. Insofar as it is oriented toward true or long-term happiness, it indeed belongs with reason.[1870] But benevolence, too, is a "principle in reasonable creatures",[1871] such that it is unclear why moral action should not simply and always stem from benevolence—especially since Butler himself emphasizes the complete harmony between it and self-love,[1872] or even asserts that the greatest "satisfaction to

1865 *Sermons*, Preface §§ 20–21 = pp. 8 ff.; cf. III § 11 = p. 35.
1866 *Op. cit.*, XII § 11 = p. 115.
1867 This is the objective reason why every attempt to definitively establish Butler's hierarchy of faculties must at least remain one-sided, not to mention the substantive determination of the individual faculties. See the summaries of such attempts in Carlsson, *Butler's Ethics*, 151 ff., and Roberts, *Concept of Benevolence*, 48, 54.
1868 *Sermons*, Preface § 41 = p. 15.
1869 *Op. cit.*, I § 14 = p. 25.
1870 *Op. cit.*, XI § 5 = p. 100.
1871 *Op. cit.*, XII § 27 = p. 119.
1872 *Op. cit.*, Preface § 38 = p. 14.

ourselves" (i.e., the deepest fulfillment of self-love) arises precisely from benevolence.[1873] Elsewhere, however, he makes the strength of benevolence dependent on the intensity of self-love,[1874] or regards benevolence—which he here places among the "particular affections"—as an "instrument of private enjoyment" and subordinated as such to long-term planning self-love.[1875] One can suspect why Butler is particularly eager to harness self-love for morality, even to the extent of occasionally placing it above benevolence: self-love in the Hobbesian version, against which Butler polemicizes,[1876] represented the greatest threat. But since he wants to proceed more cautiously in the repurposing of self-love than Shaftesbury, he does not simply identify it with benevolence. Instead, he attempts to show that self-love—precisely in its distinction from benevolence, which is cautiously complemented by its definitional difference from lower passions like avarice and ambition—can also produce moral effects on its own. This somewhat daring elevation of self-love, in its separation from benevolence, itself requires reason as a potentially useful counterweight. And so, Butler must accept not only the ambiguity in the relation between self-love and benevolence, but also that in the relation between the affections in general—and self-love in particular—and reason. On the one hand, he writes: "conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way";[1877] on the other hand, he attributes to conscience or reason the right to supervise all affections.[1878] This, however, also has to do with a concealed mistrust toward self-love; at the same time, it reveals the ambiguity of the relation between reason and the affections. Reason as such, according to Butler, does not constitute a "sufficient motive of virtue," whereas the affections are indeed "sufficient principle of action"—but their sole rule would reduce man to the animal state. The solution, then, is offered in the form of the "strict government and direction of reason".[1879] But why

1873 *Op. cit.*, I § 6 = p. 20.
1874 *Op. cit.*, XII § 12 = p. 115.
1875 *Op. cit.*, XI § 19 = p. 109.
1876 *Op. cit.*, V § 1 = p. 50 note.
1877 *Op. cit.*, III § 9 = p. 39.
1878 *Op. cit.*, II §§ 9–10 = pp. 31 f.
1879 *Op. cit.*, V §§ 3–4 = pp. 51 f.

should the rule of the affections have disastrous consequences, if the higher among them are precisely benevolence and a self-love working closely with it? And conversely: why can reason not constitute a sufficient motive for virtue, if it is capable of ruling over the affections with rigor if necessary? Butler's mediation strategy does not allow such questions to be formulated—let alone answered. Rather, he envisages a unification of affect and reason not only within the flexible hierarchy of the faculties, but even on the level of reason itself. For he once says the supreme moral instance could be called "conscience, moral reason, moral sense or divine reason," regardless of whether it is regarded "as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart; or, which seems the truth, as including both".[1880] Here we have that de-intellectualized reason that underlies Enlightenment rationalism. That it appears primarily in such mediating attempts as Butler's is no wonder.

From this analysis, the conceptual type of the British moral-philosophical debate has already emerged, and thus a discussion of other cases in which it appears in one or another modified form (e.g., in Reid's polemics against Hume and A. Smith)[1881] is unnecessary here. The following basic positions are covered by it: an empiricist approach that, after the abolition of innate ideas, wavers between morality as a function of biological-anthropological constants like pleasure and pain and morality as a social convention—and in this uncertainty must invoke God and partly also reason (Locke); a radically optimistic ontology and anthropology in which morality is innate, and thus not self-overcoming but rather the free unfolding of the deeper, "genuine" existence, such that reason has merely executive functions (Shaftesbury, Hutcheson); a privileging of the intellect as the ultimate guarantor of morality in the absence of anthropological optimism, so that morality must be defined as self-overcoming

1880 *Dissertation II* = *Selby-Bigge*, I, 246.

1881 See especially the *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, Essay V, Chapters V–VII = *Works*, 651 ff. On Reid's critique of determinism and of Hume's moral philosophy, see the good analyses by Grave, *Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense*, 203 ff., 224 ff. Against A. Smith, Reid's main argument is that Smith may be able to explain the origin of morality, but not determine what is moral (*Duncan-Baird, Reid's Criticisms*, 520). On Hume's moral philosophy, see below, Chapter VII, Section 2.

(Balguy, Price); and finally, an attempt at mediation that seeks to avoid the sharpness of these alternatives and processes the morally relevant concepts in such a way that they may be arranged in a loose hierarchy or reconciled with one another (Butler). These, however, are only the positions of normativist Enlightenment. Alongside them lives and works the sinister specter of nihilism, for which morality is nothing more than a product of the conventions of the powerful, intended to secure or facilitate their rule—a rule which is not possible without the pacification of society or the restraint of mankind's innate unbridled egoism; rule and culture thus belong together.[1882] As Mandeville's attitude toward the moral phenomenon shows, Hobbesian thought, despite the eager refutations by all the aforementioned normativist directions, was by no means dead.

c) The Difficulties of Optimistic Anthropology and the Ambiguity of Self-Love and Happiness

Nature could not replace God as long as it did not prove its ability to take over his normative functions entirely. In other words, nature had not only to displace God on the cosmological level (which it did as natural lawfulness or causality), but also to take his place as the highest guarantor of a value scale. It is not without reason that Bayle considered the derivation of moral commandments from the harmonious structure of nature to be the strongest argument in favor of a moral atheism.[1883] The instrumentalization of God also in moral-philosophical respect indicates clearly in itself how difficult the grounding of values on an entirely new basis was initially perceived to be—yet there was no turning back for the Enlightenment or modernity. Three solutions presented themselves: to fall into nihilism, to admit the artificial or posited character of values and at the same time assert their absolute indispensability for any social life, or to establish a natural ethics.[1884] The first applied only to isolated individuals, the second was due to its pronounced relativism and utilitarianism far too exposed to the suspicion of nihilism, and thus the third had to be all the more preferred, since the anthropological-ontological

1882 *Mandeville*, *Fable of the Bees*, I, 41 ff., especially 47.
1883 *Contin. des Pensées Diverses*, CLI = *Oeuvres Div.*, III, 405 f.
1884 *Crocker*, *Age of Crisis*, 40.

underpinning of the new values increased their polemical power, as it seemed to demonstrate their bindingness, indeed their inevitability. The simplest way, of course, was to complement the cosmological deification of nature with the anthropological thesis that human nature as a whole is good. But this solution was not accepted in its extreme form by most representatives of the Enlightenment, although many flirted with it. If the deification of nature could not satisfactorily explain its destructive outbursts or its often downright misanthropic behavior, then the theory of the unconditionally good human met with similar and no less severe difficulties. The optimistic anthropological monism, which wanted to portray morality more or less as a necessary outflow of human nature, seemed to promote fatalism to the same extent as the corresponding optimistic cosmological monism (materialism with inverted signs, etc.). Objections were raised against the overt or covert identification of the causal and the normative in moral philosophy for the simple reason that actual moral behavior among humans left much to be desired, as anyone could easily observe: the palette of dark colors ranged from wars to the petty and major rudenesses of everyday life. But if a moral causality were embedded and active in human nature, then everything done by humans would have to be regarded as morally satisfying. The problem had another aspect as well. If morality is, so to speak, inevitable due to this causality of human nature, then where is freedom? Is morality not identical with freedom? Is it not the laborious overcoming of evil, and if it is not, what meaning do praise and blame have in this respect? Evil, it seems, belongs to freedom and morality. After all, monism, whether as pantheism or as well-intentioned determinism devised in the interest of irrefutable justification of the good, has not been able to solve the problem of evil in a generally acceptable way.[1885] The causal and the normative could not be reconciled without remainder. Where the difficulty for optimistic monists lay primarily in interpreting all causal events in accordance with the norm, it was the other way around for materialists: they could not derive anything normative from their determinism and thus, if they needed it for socio-political reasons, had to obtain it through a logical leap.[1886]

Despite all the difficulties, an at least to some degree optimistic

1885 *Billicsism, Das Problem des Übels*, II, 357.

1886 See below, chapter VII, section 4.

concept of human nature could not be entirely abandoned; the basic forms of Enlightenment ethics are, if not thoroughly optimistic, then at least closer to optimism than to pessimism.[1887] The reference to this good or at least educable human nature provided the indispensable weapon in the fight against original sin, asceticism, and the entire conceptual apparatus of the "priests." And what could have been the most serious accusation against the "despots," if not their contempt for the dignity of human nature? A defeat on the anthropological level was something the new worldview could not afford, especially since anthropology had become its proper terrain; after the abasement of God and the corresponding rise of man, the world-view decisions had to fall primarily in the dispute over the definition of man, and it was precisely modernity that had sought and achieved this shift of the battleground. The category of "human nature" now served as the logical foundation for the justification or deductive derivation of the virtue and duty doctrine based on the new value scale. Man, nature, and morality thus had to remain connected in some way. After the ontological elevation of matter, the anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality, and the collapse of the intellect, the connection between man and nature had also to mean—within moral-philosophical intent—a prioritization of biopsychical sensuality in the foundation of morality. The question presented itself as follows: what are the constants of sensually rooted existence on the basis of which human actions and reactions can be anticipated in advance, so that in knowledge of the same the desired moral code can be formulated? The attempt to derive morality or normative reason from the natural constitution of man does, in fact, correspond to the internal logic of the existential concept of knowledge and only becomes fully comprehensible in light of our definition of Enlightenment rationalism.

The most optimistic monists naturally had no great difficulties in determining the existential constants relevant to moral philosophy. For them, the latter were not only present, but from the outset imbued with specific moral contents (goodness, sociability, etc.) that held the status of innate ideas. Those who did not want to accept innate ideas were faced with the difficulty of deducing moral content from existential constants such as pleasure and displeasure, which are in themselves value-neutral or devoid of content. This understandably

1887 *Lanson*, *Le rôle de l'expérience*, in: *Études*, 167.

made the suspicion of nihilism particularly strong against the opponents of innate ideas. Locke—without really intending to—unleashed a storm in the field of moral philosophy,[1888] and in view of the fierce reaction, many Enlightenment thinkers sought to dilute or retract Locke's position. In this case too, Voltaire represents the typical attitude—or rather the typical vacillation. In 1734, he declares in complete agreement with his philosophical mentor that philosophers who had "dreamed up innate ideas" had "abused their reason"; good and evil, he says, are equivalent to the useful and harmful, and he deploys the argument of historical relativity in full force.[1889] Four years later, Voltaire becomes much more reserved; he is careful not to let the rejection of innate ideas appear as a questioning of the moral disposition in man, and he does not even shy away from openly distancing himself from Locke. Subsequently, the argument of historical relativity is significantly toned down, and the existence of an innate "sentiment d'humanité" is asserted.[1890] The possibility of a proper reintroduction of innate ideas remained limited, however, due to their intellectualist-Cartesian pedigree. Helvétius correctly interpreted the intellectual-historical constellation when he wrote that a return to innate ideas would have to reverse the derivation of morality from the physical-existential, and thus ultimately undo the priority of nature itself.[1891]

In the attempt to establish binding morality at least theoretically without recourse to innate ideas, determinism inevitably had to gain ground, since such morality was supposed to be founded on recognized laws or regularities of human nature. Enlightenment thinkers who didn't really believe in free will could, however, reject the accusation of determinism—or even turn it to tactical advantage—by noting that the necessity of human actions and reactions allowed for the normatively desirable regulation of moral behavior on a realistic

1888 L. Stephen used a striking formulation regarding Locke's exclusion of innate ideas: "in banishing them, indeed, he was really banishing more than he intended" (*English Thought*, 35).

1889 *Traité de Métaph.*, III, IX = *OC*, XXII, 202 ff., 224 ff.

1890 *Elements* I, 5 = *OC*, XXII, 420 f.; cf. the letter to Frederick from October 1737 (= *OC*, XXXIV, 321) and the *Philosoph Ignorant*, chapters XXXIV–XXXV, written almost thirty years later = *OC*, XXVI, 82 ff.

1891 *De l'Esprit*, III, 4 = *OC*, III, 218 note.

basis. Thus, an open opponent of free will like Collins explains that only the determination of man by the pleasure principle makes possible a moral code based on rewards and punishments.[1892] Voltaire thinks no differently, after having revised his early conviction of free will.[1893] Hartley's associationist psychology also claimed to harmoniously guide feelings and opinions in all people through knowledge of their associative genesis, thereby formulating generally acceptable principles of morality and happiness;[1894] the laws of association formation could thus serve as a "principle of the artificial identification of interests".[1895] The ideal of the human engineer, impressively championed by Helvétius,[1896] arises precisely from the desire to generate morality from normative zero through the knowledge and steering of human constants and regularities, presupposing the three theses that man is nature, nature behaves causally, and morality ought to be grounded in nature. It should further be emphasized that the Enlightenment thinkers hoped, through the moral-philosophical exploitation of natural lawfulness, to disarm their opponents' strongest argument—namely, that determinism and the abolition of free will must mean the end of all morality. This is a very important aspect of the general effort to turn precisely what seems most threatening to their position into its own instrument.[1897]

Within natural morality, that layer of the soul came into focus which, according to the Platonic-Aristotelian view, was most closely linked with the purely biological dimension of man: the affects and passions—that is, everything that, in contrast to the purity of the intellect, can be described as inner or psychic sensuality. The intertwining of psychic and biological sensuality is all the more readily admitted, as the elimination of dualistic intellectualism produces a unification of the image of man within the framework of a broadly conceived sensuality. However, the signs are now reversed; affects and

1892 *Inquiry*, 87 ff.

1893 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Franc Arbitre* = *OC*, XIX, 199.

1894

1895 According to a formulation by Halévy, *Growth of Philos. Radicalism*, 15. He contrasts this with the "principle of the natural identity of interests," as represented for example by Bentham.

1896 See below, chapter VII, section 4.

1897 See below, section 5 of this chapter.

passions are no longer condemned for their rootedness in the elemental layers of human existence but are instead especially esteemed. This rehabilitation of passion reflects not only a new trust in human nature—directly paving the way for the doctrine of the natural goodness of man—[1898]but also significantly dynamizes sensuality, already pointing to its ontological elevation. The term *passio* undergoes a radical change in meaning: it no longer expresses the passive and suffering, but rather the self-moving, the inherent driving force of existence.[1899] Through this linguistically paradoxical union of passion and activity, inner unrest no longer appears as imperfection in the Christian-Stoic sense. On the contrary. As the young Diderot writes, following Shaftesbury,[1900] it is "les grandes passions, qui puissent eiever l'Ame aux grandes choses"; happy, then, is he who has them, "si toutes sont à l'unisson.[1901]" Strong passions could only be regarded as inspiration for great deeds because passion itself seemed to be the source of all human activity. "Our passions are the principal instruments of our preservation," says Rousseau, who then turns against asceticism precisely with reference to God as the giver of passions.[1902] "Our passions are the only causes of labour," says Hume,[1903] and this was echoed not only by those who were, in certain respects, close to Shaftesbury and Hutcheson—such as Hume—but also by Locke's successors, like Maupertuis, who called pleasure and pain the "deux maîtres du monde".[1904] Bayle had already emphasized, before Mandeville, that even dangerous or frivolous passions are socially indispensable and that purely rational beings would destroy *société civile*.[1905] In another context, and with the intent of demonstrating the possibility of moral atheism or the moral impotence of religion, he explained how human behavior is conditioned not by moral or theological ideas, but by the passions or the biopsychic

1898 Lanson, *Le rôle de l'expérience*, in: *Études*, 183.
1899 Mauzi, *Idée de Bonheur*, 432 ff.
1900 Venturi, *Jeunesse de Diderot*, 51 ff.
1901 *Pensées Philos.* I–IV = *OC*, I, 127 f.
1902 *Émile* IV = *Oeuvres* IV, 490 f.
1903 *Of Commerce* = *Essays*, I, 293.
1904 *Vénus*, XV = *Oeuvres* II, 77.
1905 *Lettres sur l'Histoire du Calvinisme* XVI = *Oeuvres Div.*, II, 278.

structure.[1906] Yet precisely from the assumed omnipotence of the passions, the conclusion had to be drawn that evil in the world, too, was due to their effects. Despite all recognition of their indispensability and fruitfulness, caution and restraint seemed necessary—restraint often accompanied by despair at human weakness. This entire scale of thought and mood can be well observed in Voltaire. Despite frequent abuse, for him the passions are "the principal cause of order" on this earth—namely, the cause of human socialization and of all the arts and comforts of culture.[1907] However, they are no less dangerous than necessary,[1908] and attempts at moderation often prove laborious, if not futile.[1909] Nevertheless, Voltaire—facing not only their power but also in line with his commitment to the anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality—does not wish to eradicate them, but rather to regulate them.[1910] That, however, was the problem, not the solution.

In the assumption that passion also causes evil, the Enlighteners, *nolentes volentes*, agreed with the theologians. The great difference between the two parties, however, lay in the former's determination to nonetheless erect a morality on the basis of rehabilitated biopsychic sensuality. Now, from an anti-intellectualist point of view, it was more likely to attribute immoral actions to the errors of reason than to the effects of the passions—[1911]but how then was that state, both common and characteristic, to be explained, which the poet summarized in the words: *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*? Shaftesbury's solution—who simply distinguished between *natural* and *unnatural* affections, attributed moral evils to the latter, and, seemingly satisfied with the pejorative label "unnatural," said little about their origin or

1906 *Pensées Diverses*, CXXXV, CXLIV, CLXXI = *Oeuvres Div.*, III, 87, 93, 109.
1907 *Traité de Métaph.* VIII = *OC*, XXII, 223 f.
1908 *Zadig*, XX = *OC*, XXI, 88.
1909 *Stances* II = *OC*, VIII, 506.
1910 *Remarques sur les Pensées de Pascal* = *OC*, XXII, 53.
1911 So Diderot, *Introd. aux grands principes* = *OC*, II, 88 Anm. Rousseau also tends toward this view, and that becomes understandable when we consider the inner connection between sensualism and the doctrine of the natural goodness of man: if intellectual activity is what first causes errors (in knowledge and in morality), then they do not come from nature. This side of sensualism brings Rousseau close to Condillac (*Uimack, Genèse et Rédaction de l'Émile*, 91).

anthropological relevance—[1912]was hardly more satisfactory. A third path appeared more realistic: namely, to admit the potentially natural danger of the passions, while at the same time assuming their quasi-innate capacity for self-regulation, from which a morally acceptable balance might arise. In this way, the source of anxiety could once again be turned into a reason for confidence. In this perspective, it becomes easy to understand why the problem of self-love took such a prominent place in the moral-philosophical efforts of the Enlightenment. What initially becomes apparent in this is the continuity between early positions of modern rationalism—as they emerged from its essential definition—and the fundamental motives of Enlightenment thinking. Self-preservation or self-assertion—declared by Machiavelli, Montaigne, Hobbes, Spinoza, and the Neostoics as the foundation of existence—becomes the central theme in the moral philosophy and moralism of the 17th century.[1913] The well-known paradoxical alliance of skepticism and fideism[1914] thereby takes the form of a takeover of topoi from Christian-Augustinian anthropological pessimism, according to which human reason is essentially a factotum of the passions, especially of self-love. This alliance also continues to live on in this form during the Enlightenment.[1915] Nevertheless, the tendency—already represented in the 17th century, not least by Hobbes—to erect a secular morality upon self-love is now at least proportionally stronger, as the anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality has meanwhile gained ground. Skeptics and nihilists, at any rate, usually adopt the Christian anthropological pessimism far more easily than the normatively oriented Enlighteners (with the exception of the intellectualist minority).[1916]

Against the background of the difficulties of pure optimism described above, and with the full weight of the modern conception of man, self-love must now bear the burden of a secular morality—one

1912 *Characteristicks*, II, 163 ff.

1913 Krailsheimer, *Studies in Self-Interest*, passim.

1914 See above, Chapter II, Section 3 b.

1915 Crocker, *Age of Crisis*, 257 f., 262 ff.

1916 For example, how Bayle links the thesis of the supremacy of passion with the doctrine of original sin, *Dict. hist. et crit.*, Art. Helene, Rem. Y (= II, 1412 f.) and Eve, Rem. F (= II, 1130 A).

that can no longer trivialize or simply ignore the dangerous aspect of man's natural condition, but must rather derive norms from it and thereby neutralize it in a deeper sense. In other words: the causal shall be developed in such a way that the normative arises from it; if causal and normative are not *a limine* identified here—as they are in pure optimism—then it is at least expected that they largely coincide in the end. Self-love is given by nature and, as such, an inner causality that unavoidably motivates human action: this initial position not only explains moral missteps but can also vouch for the natural character of the new morality. Self-love may indeed violate the rights of others, but as an expression of the species' instinct for self-preservation,[1917] it remains interested in the existence of peace and moral order in society as a whole, for only these guarantee long-term security for the individual. Even its smallest and most selfish forms can have socially stabilizing effects; pride, vanity, and ambition can drive people to act in conformity with norms when such behavior is rewarded with social recognition.[1918] The Achilles' heel of this argument has already been pointed out in Hobbes: what guarantees, namely, that self-love and the inclinations and passions springing from it will hold fast to existing rules in those critical cases where they can violate them with impunity —thus securing both the benefit of their general existence and the advantage of their private violation at the same time? This practically decisive question is not answered directly, but rather by smuggling in something rational-normative, with the aim of neutralizing the conflict between causal and normative by silently interpreting the former in light of the needs of the latter. (The harmony between the two—which, unlike the thesis of pure optimism, is supposed to be the end result of the self-unfolding of the causal—is therefore again *a limine* assumed, but this time discreetly.) The natural becomes normative by being spiritualized, made rational. In other words, the concept of self-love is processed in such a way that it can conform to normative demands.

1917 Voltaire draws an interesting parallel between self-love as an "instrument de notre conservation" and the "instrument de la perpétuité de l'espèce", *Dict. Phil.*, Art. Amour-Propre = *OC*, XVII, 179.

1918 Evidence in Crocker, *Age of Crisis*, 282 ff.; cf. Lovejoy, *Essays*, 62 ff. A. Smith polemicizes against Mandeville using the distinction between Pride and Vanity, which corresponds to that between rational and irrational self-love, see below (*Theory of Moral Sentiments* VI, 3 and VII, 2 = pp. 255 ff., 308 ff.).

Once again, the distinction between *being* and *ought* proves useful, and "false" or irrational self-love is contrasted with "true" or rational or enlightened self-love; thus, the natural is fundamentally preserved, but its morally unacceptable aspect is eliminated by relegating it to the normatively irrelevant realm of "false" self-love.[1919]

Now, the careful distinction between the two types of self-love amounts at least to a partial, if indirect, renunciation of the original claim to derive morality from nature (and not simply in the sense of pure optimism). For rational self-love is supposed to distinguish itself precisely by preferring the long-term satisfaction of self-preservation needs to short-term ones—that is, by consciously resisting the latter. But the question arises: which instance shows self-love its "true" interest, so that the renunciation of immediate pleasure can be felt as justified? If self-love as such were capable of recognizing its own "true" interest, the distinction between rational and irrational self-love would become superfluous. On the other hand, renunciation of an immediate satisfaction in favor of a later and greater one presupposes both a reflective and evaluative—that is, intellectual—activity, and a power that can halt irrational self-love. If rational self-love is that power, then it is so not as self-love, but as rational self-love. Thus, both the recognition and the pursuit of the "true" interest require (self-)active reason. The effective surrender of pure natural morality in view of the conflict between causal and normative, or in the effort to save the latter despite all natural morality, becomes solemnly evident in the fact that rational self-love is assigned precisely those tasks that, in intellectualist morality, reason alone was supposed to fulfill: self-overcoming and the renunciation of the "apparent" in favor of the "true" good. (This surrender is, however, partially disguised by continuing to use the term "self-love," which symbolically marks the natural-moral approach.) D'Alembert tellingly—if perhaps unconsciously—uses a word with strong Christian overtones to define enlightened self-love: "l'amour éclairé de nous-mêmes est le principe de tout *sacrifice* moral.[1920]" Among theorists of self-love, one often observes the attempt to offer, beyond the distinction between irrational and rational self-love, additional guarantees for securing the normative. The later Rousseau, although he opposes *amour-propre*,

1919 Crocker, *Nature and Culture*, 275 f.
1920 *Elements*, VIII = *Oeuvres* II, 192.

from which all "passions haineuses et irascibles"[1921] supposedly stem, to *amour de soi*, which is "toujours bon et toujours conforme à l'ordre," still turns—driven by his earlier mistrust of the social consequences of self-love—[1922]not to "true" self-love for final moral guarantees, but instead to instinctive reason or conscience,[1923] and simultaneously to the *volonté générale*,[1924] notwithstanding the profound opposition between the individualism of the former and the collectivism of the latter.[1925] Hartley, too, is not satisfied with merely conceptually distinguishing "gross" and "refined self-interest"; since the latter does good only for private reasons, it must be subordinated to "rational self-interest," which enables a "Pursuit of a Man's greatest possible Happiness without any Partiality.[1926]" Equally revealing and representative is Pope's juxtaposition of differing—though closely presented—views of self-love in its relation to reason. On the one hand, self-love appears as the sole source of good and evil, with the former seen as the product of its self-regulation without external aid:

"So drives Self-Love...
To one Man's power, ambition, lucre and lust:
The same Self-Love... becomes the cause
Of what restrains him.[1927]"

But elsewhere Pope highlights the identity of "true Self-Love and Social,[1928]" which leads to a significant restriction that ultimately ends in the thesis of the normative inferiority of self-love to reason. Since nature most tightly entwines good and evil within self-love, reason —"the bias"—must extract the former from the latter.[1929] True, it is not in reason's power to eradicate self-love, but it should guide it:[1930] for individual passions, all offshoots of self-love, are not always able to

1921 *Émile*, IV = *Oeuvres*, IV, 491, 493.
1922 *Origines de l'Inégalité*, Note IX = *Oeuvres*, III, 203.
1923 *Émile*, IV = *Oeuvres*, IV, 600.
1924 *Contrat social*, I, 8 = *Oeuvres* III, 365.
1925 Crocker, *Nature and Culture*, 278.
1926 *Observations on Man*, Chap. IV, Sect. III = I, 458 ff.
1927 *Essay on Man*, III, vv. 269–272 = p. 48.
1928 *op. cit.*, IV, v. 396 = p. 69.
1929 *op. cit.*, II, vv. 196–199 = p. 29.
1930 *op. cit.*, II, v. 162 = p. 28.

clearly distinguish "seeming" from "real" good.[1931] Self-love is to drive forward, and reason is to hold it in check—[1932]but both desire the same thing: to attain pleasure and avoid pain.[1933] This turn shows the concept of reason underlying natural morality. We will have to return to it at the end of this section.

The same conceptual structure appears in the much-discussed question of happiness and its relation to virtue. In terms of content, the problem of happiness is already a further development of the problem of self-love: happiness is essentially the deep and lasting satisfaction of the self, and the striving for it can only stem from an equally deep and lasting effect of self-love; happiness is thus saturated self-love. The anti-ascetic exaltation of happiness in the Enlightenment therefore had to go hand in hand with the attempt to build a natural morality on self-love—especially since the demand for happiness carried with it the claim to self-determination of the self.[1934] Self-love as the foundation and happiness as the goal of natural morality thus had to jointly address the moral-philosophical problem of their relation to virtue. For happiness in its new, anti-ascetic sense could only be compatible with a virtue that did not exhaust itself in the ceaseless torment of self-overcoming, but rather crowned the natural morality built on self-love. As saturated self-love, happiness was therefore exposed to the same dangers as unrestrained self-love. Precisely the satisfying fulfillment of existential needs threatens to destroy the harmony of happiness and virtue when it comes at the expense of others. The following of nature as happiness turns against the following of nature as virtue. In other words, nature—which was supposed to form the common denominator of happiness and virtue—can hardly fulfill this role, as it is internally divided: now conceived as the source of happiness, now as the basis of moral values.[1935] The causal and the normative in it logically diverge, although the assumption that happiness and virtue are compatible was based on belief in their unity. This belief, however, can only be upheld through serious, if tacit, theoretical concessions, which can be observed in the efforts to harmonize happiness and

1931 *op. cit.*, II, v. 93 f. = p. 25.
1932 *op. cit.*, II, v. 54 = p. 23.
1933 *op. cit.*, II, v. 88 = p. 24.
1934 See above in this section under a.
1935 Mauzi, *Idée de Bonheur*, 430 f.

virtue. The underlying embarrassment stems from the fact that, according to the new conception, happiness must be self-unfolding, while at the same time the traditional notion of virtue as self-overcoming cannot (entirely) be abandoned—lest the self-unfolding of the one come into open, socially unacceptable conflict with that of the other. The theoretical concession thus consists in relinquishing the programmatically envisioned full identity of happiness in the new sense with virtue; just as the distancing from pure anthropological optimism had occurred in light of the potential danger of self-love, so too this concession is meant to account for the undeniable presence of evil in the world. On the other hand, the anti-ascetic natural morality must be maintained, and in view of this double goal, there arises the dual task of achieving—against the background of the entanglement of being and ought in the concept of nature—a harmonization of happiness and virtue that stands under the sign of the aforementioned theoretical concession. The question is actually trivial and reads as follows: how is the individualistic, outwardly at least potentially aggressive hedonism of happiness to be reconciled with the renunciation for the good of others demanded by virtue?[1936] We must keep in mind that this question acquires its full sharpness when happiness is understood in the sense of the radical, anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality, whereby virtue is no longer regarded as a sufficient or sole condition of happiness,[1937] while at the same time value nihilism is to be avoided. Despite its triviality, then, this question has a very specific significance for the normativist Enlightenment.

The somewhat forced theoretical concession that happiness and virtue are in fact not always completely and unconditionally identical made the conceptual mediation between the two an urgent task, during which ambiguities emerged that were as logically inevitable as that concession had proven factually necessary. These ambiguities manifest themselves in two ways. First, within the pair "happiness–virtue," now the former, now the latter could gain the upper hand and reduce the other to an appendage, without the pair as such being called into question.[1938] Under its banner, very different substantive positions could be represented, ranging from a Christian-tinged

1936 *op. cit.*, 581 ff., 85 ff.

1937 See, e.g., Argens, *Phil. du bon sens*, Refl. VII § 2 (= II, 343 f.).

1938 Crodter, *Nature and Culture*, 225.

subordination of happiness to virtue ("true" happiness is spiritual in nature and reserved only for the virtuous), to the utilitarian view that virtue is a means of obtaining happiness in a society that rewards the virtuous—as Vauvenargues put it: "L'utilité de la vertu est si manifeste, que les méchants la pratiquent par l'intérêt.[1939]" Second, ambiguity reigns in the relationship between happiness and pleasure —a relationship that, due to the anti-ascetic conception of happiness, had become closer than ever before and precisely for that reason now demanded clarification. The nihilistic consequences of a complete identification of happiness and pleasure in a purely biological sense are now to be avoided through a normatively inspired reworking of the concept of pleasure. Just as the close alignment of happiness and virtue required a distinction between "true" and "apparent" happiness, so too could the fundamental connection between (true) happiness and pleasure only be maintained by separating true and lasting from apparent and fleeting pleasure. Here, the principle of pleasure remains untouched, yet a hierarchy of pleasures is established, with intellectual pleasure placed at the top.[1940] One example may illustrate this ambiguous stance. According to Maupertuis, pleasure and pain form the fundamental conceptual pair in moral philosophy.[1941] Good is "une somme de moments hereux," evil "a sum of unhappy moments.[1942]" The anti-ascetic tone also clearly resonates in the view that sensual pleasure is no less noble than intellectual pleasure—or rather, that the nobility of pleasure should be measured more by its intensity than by its origin.[1943] Yet, precisely with reference to this criterion, Maupertuis considers spiritual-mental pleasure—attained through "practice of justice" and "vision of truth"—to be the most intense and enduring, and thus the noblest type of pleasure.[1944] He simultaneously opposes any intellectualist or sensualist one-sidedness, both in the practice and theory of morality,[1945] ultimately contemplating the possibility of a world-

1939 *Maximes*, No. 759 = *Oeuvres*, 477.
1940 Mauzi, *Idée de Bonheur*, 404 ff.
1941 *Essai de Phil. Morale*, I = *Oeuvres*, I, 193.
1942 *loc. cit.*, 197.
1943 *op. cit.*, III = I, 206 f.
1944 *loc. cit.*, 212 f.
1945 *loc. cit.*, 206, 209.

affirming Christianity within which the desired equilibrium could be realized.[1946] One clearly sees how flexible the schema offered by Maupertuis is. The initial identification of happiness and pleasure eventually, by means of the distinction between being and ought, transitions into a demand for a modernized or instrumentalized Christianity.

Depending on the thinker and the opponent, it is defined which kind of satisfaction of biological and psychological sensuality is "truly natural" or "truly rational," and which has nothing to do with the "properly understood" voice of nature. The mutually overlapping or cancelling definitions of this kind produce a confusing picture when considering the entire epoch; nevertheless, the general effort is unmistakable: to mitigate the conflict between the causal and the normative (at least partially) by granting the normative, through a (partial) autonomy of reason, its own resistant locus. In this way, the theological opponent is shown that one can manage morality from the Enlightenment's own insight and power, without having to fall into nihilism. Yet dualism is thereby once again accepted, and the Enlighteners can initially only counter theology with the claim that they can guide man even better than the theologians—while granting the latter a sound moral starting point.[1947] The (partial) reintroduction of dualism, however, brought with it a new conflict between being and ought, although it was intended to resolve the dispute between the causal and the normative: if the causal, through the rehabilitation of sensuality, threatened to overwhelm the normative, then the normative —now recognized as autonomous—had, for its part, to take control of the causal or the sensual, which in turn endangered anti-ascetic morality.[1948] It is to this logical deadlock that the philosophy of feeling owes its tremendous success: it seemed to have found an instance in man that harmoniously united ratio (or the voice of nature) and

1946 *op. cit.*, IV = I, 232 ff.

1947 As Ehrard (*Idée de Nature*, 384) aptly puts it: "*Pour triompher de la morale chrétienne, il faut que celle-ci reste sauve, au prix d'une contradiction*."

1948 Against this background, some statements by Enlightenment thinkers that appear rather traditionally ascetic are to be understood. For example, Voltaire: "*La vertu n'est pas un bien; c'est un devoir: elle est d'un genre différent, d'un ordre supérieur. Elle n'a rien à voir aux sensations douloureuses ou agréables*" (*Dict. Phil.*, *Art. Bien, souverain* = *OC*, XVII, 576).

(refined) psychic sensuality. The philosophy of feeling leads to a broadening and loosening of concepts like passion and pleasure, so that these eventually become hardly distinguishable from delicate feeling (whereas theologians prefer to use such terms in the sense of blind instinct).[1949] And the century's novelistic literature—already suspected and persecuted for immorality due to its new realistic orientation—[1950]mostly focuses on the portrayal of noble or refined feelings, providing models that help many people stylize their own behavior. Rehabilitated sensuality is thus tamed through this and similar detours and only in this form accepted by the enlightened public. There was no need to condemn feeling (and the feeling of pleasure) if it was so composed that it scarcely diverged from "true" reason and its prescriptions. The anti-intellectualist concept of rationalism again provides mediation here; it fuses happiness and virtue, pleasure and virtuous happiness. In its existential rootedness, reason is supposed to remain both close to the sensual and strong enough to halt its feared excesses if necessary. It appears capable of showing the path to realizing the norm across all oppositions between the spiritual and the sensual, because it carries the norm—or the unity of the spiritual and the sensual—within itself from the beginning. As such normative reason, it must therefore be clearly distinguished from the merely instrumental kind, which can serve both good and evil and is usually equated with the intellect as such by the philosophers of feeling.[1951] The envisioned great unity of self-love and universal norm, of happiness without asceticism and virtue as a form of freedom felt in an existential way, is considered possible because normative reason is no longer bound to the intellect, and thus no longer to anthropological dualism. That, however, was only the program: in reality, the resolved open and consistent dualism of the intellectualists was replaced by the dualism of vacillation.

1949 *Crocker*, *Age of Crisis*, 226 f.
1950 *May*, *Le Dilemme du Roman*, especially chapters 2 and 3.
1951 *Mauzi*, *Idée du Bonheur*, 521, 526, 544.

4. Philosophy of History Between Eschatological Confidence and Relativistic Resignation

a) The Emergence of New Historiography and the Concept of Cultural Wholeness

The romantic legend of the Enlightenment being indifferent or even hostile to history has long been refuted,[1952] and no further word need be spent on it. Rather, it is necessary to explain satisfactorily why the Enlightenment had to bring forth a new kind of historical inquiry, which—despite its different forms, from the most positivist to the most eschatological—has proven fruitful enough to significantly influence or even directly or indirectly produce many leading historical or philosophy-of-history schools over the past two centuries. This continuity is one reason why the historical achievement of the Enlightenment could only become fully apparent after the emergence of modern sociology and social anthropology, and their increasing intertwinement with political historiography. The romantic legend accused the Enlightenment of being unhistorical and intellectualist—indeed, it derived the former from the latter. This double accusation was completely false, but the supposed logical connection between its two aspects did in fact exist. That is: had the Enlightenment been intellectualist in orientation, it would have had to behave ahistorically in the wake of Descartes—and conversely: its groundbreaking historical achievement goes hand in hand with its anti-intellectualist core tendency. For the hegemony of the intellect was shattered by the thesis that man is nature—a thesis which itself stood under the sign of

1952 Dilthey's important contribution to this is well known. See his treatise *Das 18. Jh. und die geschichtliche Welt*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* III, 209 ff. However, today Dilthey's statements on individual aspects of this problem must be read with great caution.

the ontological elevation of matter and the anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality. The assumption of a sensual rootedness of human existence differs radically from similar theological, especially scholastic, notions due to the implied—if not explicitly stated—priority of this-worldliness; it no longer pointed to a temporary or inferior state, but served as the programmatic starting point for a new contemplation and investigation of the human in its autonomy. The execution of this program, however, required a closer investigation of human ties to the physical and social environment. If sensuality is inseparable from the human essence, then one cannot imagine man in a vacuum, but must grasp him in his rootedness in his milieu, since sensuality cannot escape the milieu, and since social life—species-life—can hardly be understood without sensuality. As a sensual being, man is conditioned by geographical factors; as a sensual being, he inherits the traits of a race and is thus marked already before his birth; as a sensual being, he struggles for survival or well-being—and not only individually, but most effectively within social organization. The elevation of individual sensuality opens the way to an understanding of the significance of the supra-individual—the geographical and social—sensual, just as the reverse holds true. The idea of man as a unity, developed in the struggle against intellectualist dualism, is now extended through the idea of the unity of man with his milieu.

The modern foundational motif of self-preservation, under these circumstances, receives its large-scale historical-sociological concretization. Since the Renaissance, it had been implicitly or explicitly linked to the primacy of anthropology, which in turn had allied itself with the primacy of nature in a joint opposition to the primacy of God. In the thesis of the naturalness of man, this alliance of nature and man becomes visible. Man as nature and the nature of man now often mean the same thing. And just as in the conception that nature is an autonomous whole, the immense diversity of natural phenomena appears as an infinite scale of variations of the same recurring fundamental themes or laws, so too is the rich variety of history—its activities, situations, and transformations—seen as the outflow of the one human nature. The presuppositions of history are to be found in nature (this assumption forms another important aspect of the intended interweaving of nature and culture),[1953] in a double

1953 See above, Chapter V, Section 4.

sense: in external nature as the geographical or even cosmic framework of human action, and in that nature which condenses into man—that is, the biological structure of the human being. With this, that fundamental drive for self-preservation, which man shares with all organic life, is eo ipso posited, and proceeds to express itself vigorously in the most diverse forms and at the most diverse levels. If we recall the role of the self-preservation drive (as self-love) in Enlightenment moral philosophy, then its historical-theoretical function becomes clear to us as well. Social life serves the securing of self-preservation; social life, in turn, forms the basis of all cultural development and refinement—but also (at least from the perspective of the individual) the secret or open transgression of the rules of that life, i.e., crime or war, are meant to serve it. Enlightened self-love and blind selfishness thus constitute the two poles of human action—both social and moral. What remains decisive, however, is that in explaining this action, one way or another, reference is always made to nature, as it manifests itself with elemental force through and in the self-preservation drive. Not least, it is this understanding of the naturalness of man that Enlightenment philosophers of history have in view when they speak of the one human nature as the basis of history; such is the case with Voltaire[1954] and likewise with Hume.[1955] Hence, one should not immediately suspect Enlightenment abstraction when the phrase "the one human nature" appears. For it refers to the naturalness of human existence, i.e., to man rooted in the senses, struggling for self-preservation, and thereby capable of both greatness and wickedness—it is meant to emphasize the anthropological foundation of history as

1954 *Essai sur les Moeurs*, Introduction VII = *OC*, XI, 21: "L'homme, en général, a toujours été ce qu'il est: cela ne veut pas dire qu'il ait toujours eu de belles villes ... Mais il a toujours eu le même instinct, qui le porte à s'aimer dans soi-même, dans la compagnie de son plaisir, dans ses enfants, dans ses petits-fils, dans les œuvres de ses mains."
Self-love here is all-encompassing; from it spring social feelings and cultural achievements.

1955 *Human Understanding*, VIII = *Essays* II, 68: "... human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions ... Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit; these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of all the actions and enterprises..."

such and is connected with the anti-theological primacy of anthropology. So understood, the assumption of one human nature is not an abstract construction, but on the contrary, the precondition for treating history in concrete terms. Abstraction begins when the one human nature is presented as the epitome of supratemporal norms—i.e., when the naturalness of man no longer refers to the causal, but primarily or exclusively to the normative aspect of the concept of nature.

A reference to Ferguson would be instructive in our context, especially since his *Essay* represents one of the very few contemporary attempts at a systematically structured presentation of a theory of history in the new sense. Ferguson starts from the—by now commonplace—[1956]primacy of anthropology and accordingly devotes the first quarter of his book to human nature; "our principal study" should be "the laws" of its "animal" as well as its spiritual side.[1957] However, Ferguson does not want the distinction between these two sides to be understood in the sense of intellectualist dualism. He speaks of man as an animal among "other animals"[1958] and considers the drive for self-preservation, which is more effectively realized in man due to "reflection and foresight," to be the great common denominator.[1959] Mental capacities and functions in man are thus not the exact opposite, but rather the continuation and elaboration of his animal—though specifically human—constitution. The drive for self-preservation also has another dual aspect: it can produce harmony and discord, solidarity and war. Ferguson follows the chapter on this with two others: the first dedicated to "Union among Mankind" and the last to the problem of "War and Dissension".[1960] Man's "mixed disposition

1956 Even Pope still justifies his famous formula: "The proper study of mankind is man" (*Essay*, II, v. 2 = p. 21) through the pious reflection that a finite intelligence such as the human can only recognize what is human, that is, finite. Hume ("the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences", *Treatise*, Introduction, XX) or Diderot (man should become the "centre commun" of all scientific endeavor, *Art. "Encyclopédie"* = *OC*, XIV, 453) no longer take this into account; the primacy of anthropology becomes simply self-evident.

1957 *Essay*, I, 1 = p. 3.

1958 *Op. Cit.*, I, 1 = p. 4.

1959 *Op. Cit.*, I, 2 = p. 11 f.

1960 *Op. Cit.*, I, 3 and 4 = p. 16 ff., 20 ff.

to friendship and enmity"[1961] is thus thought together with his spiritual-animal dual character, from which arises a multidimensional overall conception of human nature—one that Ferguson finds elastic enough to grasp and explain the events of past, present, and future. "The seeds of every form are lodged in human nature; they spring up and ripen with the season".[1962] Progress is a specifically human phenomenon—that is, it does not occur in the rest of the animal kingdom—[1963]and unfolds within the framework laid down by human nature. Both the conditions for progress and its ever new achievements and contents constitute this human nature. "Art itself is natural to man",[1964] and therefore human nature becomes the *summa summarum* of all historical realities and possibilities. It is therefore superfluous to search for the "true" state of nature, since man is always and everywhere in his natural state.[1965] This identification of possibility and actuality, of human nature and human world, illustrates the close connection between the primacy of anthropology and the turn toward the study of the social and historical. It is therefore neither a coincidence nor a contradiction that constancy of human nature and the diversity of progress are addressed simultaneously. For it is precisely from the prioritization of man in his naturalness that the theoretical priority of those factors emerges which are connected to the manifold needs of this very man. This explains the strong anthropological-sociological orientation of the new historiography, in which its great innovation actually lies.

The new attitude is shown most impressively in the hitherto unprecedented attention paid to economic factors in history. The economistic tendency of early liberal thought appears especially clearly among the representatives of the Scottish school, who pose the question of the "mode of subsistence" of man in a way that occasionally anticipates Marx.[1966] The analysis of the material mode of

1961 *Op. Cit.*, I, 1 = p. 3.
1962 *Op. Cit.*, III, 2 = p. 123.
1963 *Op. Cit.*, I, 1 = p. 4 f.
1964 *Op. Cit.*, I, 1 = p. 6.
1965 *Op. Cit.*, I, 1 = p. 8. Cf. Jogland, *Soziologie bei Ferguson*, 72.
1966 Meek, *The Scottish Contribution*, 37 f. The expression "mode of subsistence" quoted by Meek comes from Robertson. Ferguson writes "way of subsistence" (*Essay*, I, 9 = p. 62). Cf. Ferguson's depiction of the life of primitive

existence of socially living man even forms the basis of periodization attempts, which now become necessary in light of the assumption of historical progress. A. Smith outlines a four-stage theory based on economic criteria,[1967] which can tellingly also be reconstructed from the economic articles of the *Encyclopédie*.[1968] The study of phenomena such as division of labor, property, etc., in turn leads to sociological reflections on the origin and function of institutions. The new theoretical primacy of the social is anthropologically supported by the thesis of the natural sociability of man, although the dispositions of the individual psyche are at times regarded as causes, at other times as components of a given social structure.[1969] Whether crystallization or stimulation of the psyche: institutions are indispensable framework conditions for the activity of a being who is social by nature.[1970] This activity, however, aims—among other things—at securing material existence, and thus the psychological and economic aspects of the theory of institutions must be considered together; in any case, the Scots avoid pure psychologism. In one way or another, they clearly express the break of the new theoretical conception of history with the traditional. The social whole, in its multidimensionality, can no longer be regarded merely as the product of the sovereign will of a single legislator, as ancient, humanistic, or absolutist historiography tended to assume. Such founders of states and legislators are, according to Ferguson, rather legendary figures; for "the forms of society are derived from an obscure and distant origin; they arise, long before the date of philosophy, from the instincts, not from the speculations of

or barbaric peoples, where modes of production and property relations play a prominent role (II, 2 and 3 = p. 81 ff.).

1967 Hunting, pasturage, farming, commerce. For the features of each phase in detail see Skinner, *Smith*, 156 ff.; Skinner rightly speaks of Smith's "almost Marxian reliance which is placed on economic factors" (155, cf. 175).

1968 Hubert, *Sciences sociales*, 289 ff.; regarding the novel emphasis on economic and socio-historical factors in the *Encyclopédie* see in general Schargo Hoyt, *Méthode et interprétation*, especially 367 ff.

1969 Bryson, *Man and Society*, chap. VI, 148 ff., especially 151 f., 170 ff.; even the Encyclopedists seek in institutions "l'influence de ses [des Menschen] instincts les plus primitifs et ses besoins les plus matériels", Hubert, *Sciences sociales*, 359.

1970 Bryson, *Man and Society*, 173 ff.

men".[1971] Even change and variety in forms of government do not stem from the arbitrariness of individuals, but instead "the extent, the way of subsistence, the character and the manners of different nations" are decisive here.[1972] The demotion of conventional political historiography further appears in Ferguson's promising thesis that, in every form of government, there exists alongside the "formal establishment" a "casual subordination" that is related to the "distribution of property," and that this—though unofficial—"gives the state its tone and fixes its character".[1973] Millar, too, casts doubt on the "concurring testimony of historians" concerning the role of great lawgivers, and asserts the priority of objective circumstances.[1974] He likewise traces differences "of law and government" to "differences of situation," which are in turn shaped by the following factors: "the fertility or barrenness of the soil, the nature of its productions, the species of labour requisite for procuring subsistence, the number of individuals collected together in one community, their proficiency in arts, the advantages which they enjoy for entering into mutual transactions, and for maintaining an intimate correspondence".[1975] Shortly thereafter, Millar notes that the "ideas and feelings" of a society's members will be "in conformity to their situation," as just outlined.[1976] Ferguson had earlier emphasized that intellectual development is socially conditioned and directed; each sharpens his own intellect in the effort "to produce his mind in public," or to successfully play his role "as a member of society, as a friend or an enemy": "here, indeed, the understanding appears to borrow very much from the passions".[1977] These statements must be precisely noted. They confirm that the turn away from intellectualism and toward history as the field of action of natural man are closely related. The genetic approach in epistemology, which became necessary after that turn,[1978] now aligns with the genetic explanation of the social

1971 *Essay* III, 2 = p. 122; cf. II, 2 = p. 86.
1972 *Op. Cit.* I, 9 = p. 62.
1973 *Op. Cit.* III, 3 = p. 133.
1974 *Distinction of Ranks*, Introduction, 177 f.
1975 Ibid., 175.
1976 Ibid., 176.
1977 *Essay*, I, 5 = p. 29.
1978 See above, Chapter IV, Section 4 and Chapter V, Section 1.

forms of the spirit. Just as, according to the empiricist view, the mind should be rooted in the senses, so too, according to the new historical outlook, individual or collective ideology should be the expression and result of specific material conditions.

The Scottish emphasis on economic factors cannot be considered representative of the entire new conception of history, even if it does bring to light some important theoretical consequences of the fundamental thesis of the naturalness of man. Incidentally, the Scots themselves, as the quoted passages show, are far from an economic determinism; yet on the continent, the conception of the cultural whole appears even more loosely and abstractly structured than among them. It generally comprises—albeit in varying dosages and combinations—the biological (race), geographical (climate, soil, location), and socio-historical (economy, customs, form of government) sensibility, as well as the related domain of the arts and sciences. Against the background of this cultural whole, a meaningful connection and thus explanation of individual historical events is now to be achieved. However, this already implied a prior decision regarding the evaluation or importance of the events themselves. Voltaire states it explicitly. The "heap of useless facts"[1979] is to be cleared away; only those are important which relate to the customs and spirit of the era or nation in question;[1980] selection is to occur solely with regard to them,[1981] so that "in conserving those which paint the mores, you make from this chaos a general and well-articulated tableau";[1982] "true history" is the history of customs, laws, arts, and the progress of the human spirit.[1983] So, when Voltaire demands that history be written "as a philosopher",[1984] he means both a particular conception of human activity and of the human in general, as well as—in a narrower sense—the treatment of the material appropriate to that conception: as so often, seemingly neutral methodological principles serve here to support a substantive position. In this way, a break is at least made

1979 *Supplément à l'Essai*, I = *OC* XXIV, 543.
1980 *Essai*, CLXXXVIII = *OC* XIII, 123.
1981 *Supplément à l'Essai*, III = *OC* XXIV, 548.
1982 *Préface de 1754* = *OC* XXIV, 42.
1983 Letter to Baron de Tott from 23.4.1767 = *OC* XLV, 230.
1984 Letter to Thieriot from 31.10.1738 = *OC* XXXV, 32; cf. his remarks about Hume's *History of England* in *OC* XXV, 169 f.

with gallant historiography and with the methods of the polyhistors (cf. below). Nonetheless, a considerable gap yawns between claim and achievement—not only with Voltaire, but also with culturally historical approaches outside of France.[1985] In their eagerness to demonstrate the soundness of the new conception of history as quickly as possible and to exert influence on the present, the Enlighteners often remained at the level of the working methods of the humanists, so that their impulses in the field of cultural history appear far more significant than the concrete results of their own work.[1986] Leaving such weaknesses aside, there was also an objective reason why cultural history could not displace political history across the board, even though the latter was this time located closer to Machiavelli and Guicciardini than to court historiography. The already-functioning system of the European balance of power made it necessary to take the factor of "statehood" into account in the historical analysis of both the present and the early modern period; the historical work of Robertson and Hume undoubtedly possesses (also) a strong and conscious political dimension.[1987]

The radical reorientation of historiography, as it was carried out through the prioritization of the cultural whole, had just as much its socio-historical preconditions as, for example, the dethronement of

1985 See the remarks of Schaumkell (*Geschichte der deutschen Kulturgeschichtsschreibung*, 61, 67) about Gatterer and Schlözer. Universities and academies in Germany produced a double effect; although they promoted historical scholarship in general, they remained heavily attached to the annalistic-antiquarian method, since — often at the behest of rulers — they engaged in genealogical research or wrote political history from a specific dynastic perspective (Kraus, *Vernunft und Geschichte*, especially 350 ff., 394 ff.). Kraus argues that precisely this apparent backwardness later helped German historiography to achieve more mature accomplishments, because it never neglected source research and knew how to organically connect the traditional and the modern (550 ff.). Nevertheless, Schlenke's observation remains correct that, for example, in England — despite weaker institutional organization — the social conditions were considerably more favorable for the development of the new historiography (*Anfänge wissenschaftlicher Geschichtsschreibung*, 322).
1986 Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie*, 346 f.
1987 Schlenke, *Kulturgeschichte oder politische Geschichte*, especially 66 ff., 74 f., 89 f.

God.[1988] In its deliberate distancing from political history—which revolved around the deeds and misdeeds of statesmen—the concept of the cultural whole expresses the society's demand for emancipation from the absolutist state on the level of historical methodology. In other words, the new historiography emerges during a particular phase of the modern disintegration of state and society, when society feels mature and strong enough to engage in open struggle against the former.[1989] In this broad sense, it is bourgeois historiography, for it presents precisely that as the most important fact which, in the bourgeois view, is of highest value: productive labor in all its forms—from the elementary, which serves to secure material existence, to the most refined, which brings forth science and art. (The bourgeois value scale simultaneously gains the status of scientific assertion in the young political economy through the solemn elevation of the factor "labor".[1990]) War—the traditional occupation of the feudal aristocracy—is by contrast seen as unproductive and harmful, or as part of that class's parasitic lifestyle. To the parasitic and destructive is now opposed the productive and fulfilling; commerce is to replace war as the mode of interaction between nations.[1991] Even the sociological thesis on the connection between economy and ethics is reinterpreted in the sense of bourgeois mythology or eschatology—for example, in the claim that the development of trade and industry automatically improves morals because it requires the observance of contractual agreements.[1992]

1988 See previous notes in this chapter.
1989 The terminological distinction between state and society is indeed only occasionally and without consequence made in the 18th century, but the tendency is clearly evident in the statements and conceptions of that time: thus Angermann, *Das Auseinandertreten von Staat und Gesellschaft*, 100. Cf. Conze, *Staat und Gesellschaft*, 3 f.
1990 A. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, especially Introduction and Chapters I and V of the first book (= I, 1 f., 7 ff., 34 ff.). For the primary importance of the factor "labor" in Hume's reflections on cultural history and political economy, see the thorough and precise account in Stewart, *Moral and Political Philosophy of Hume*, especially 161 f., 177 ff. On the social and intellectual historical background of this elevation of the concept of labor, see Conze, *Arbeit*, 174 ff., and Adel, 24.
1991 Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques*, X = *OC*, XXII, 110.
1992 Millar, *Selections*, 383 f. Hume thought similarly; see Stewart, *Moral and Political Philosophy of Hume*, 187 f.

Against this socio-historical background, the simultaneous attack on both gallant historiography and archival polyhistory becomes more comprehensible. Though they shared little in content and style, both were often in the service of absolutist rulers. Gallant historiography was in part a faithful and in part a degenerate continuation of Renaissance humanist historiography.[1993] Owing to this origin, it already prioritized lavish depictions of the great deeds of great individuals, and facts were often used merely as occasions for rhetorical embellishment. It was, understandably, a tried-and-true form of court historiography. But even philological-editorial activity—which made considerable advances in the 17th century and undoubtedly promoted a stricter historical sensibility—was not immune to dynastic influence, as older documents were often used to historically legitimize contemporary claims.[1994] The new historiography now distances itself from both forms of court historiography in two respects. In terms of content, the deeds of princes and military leaders, to the extent they are considered worthy of mention, are diminished or trivialized by being situated within a framework based on entirely different values and criteria than those allegedly associated with them. Stylistically, it moves away both from the dryness of the polyhistorians and the rhetorical excesses of gallant historiography, instead approximating or even competing with the literary form of the novel (another genuine creation of the 18th century).[1995] In fact, this results in a kinship—both in style and effect—between the new literature and the new historiography.[1996] This reflects the sociological fact that the practitioners of the latter were Enlightenment-minded men of letters. The distinct emphasis on culture in the narrower sense of the arts in this new historiography corresponded to the heightened self-awareness of the now more or less independent intellectual class. The court-dependent scholar, who often feared for his livelihood and at times for his life,[1997] found it much harder to believe that people like himself were producing the most beautiful and important elements of history than did the 18th-century

1993 Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie*, 332 ff.
1994 Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 148 ff., 151 f. Cf. also notes above.
1995 Vierhaus, *Geschichtsschreibung als Literatur*, especially 421 f.
1996 Black, *Art of History*, 14 ff.
1997 Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 140 ff.

literary intellectual, who in some cases was financially independent or had a public to whom he could freely sell his intellectual work—and who saw himself, moreover, as a representative of new values or even as a moral legislator. The young Republic of Letters now demonstrated its power by setting new historiographical standards. Voltaire made himself its spokesman when he forcefully highlighted the historical achievements of intellectuals while referring to politicians, etc., as "illustrious scoundrels".[1998]

The primacy of the cultural whole entailed a twofold promotion of relativistic-skeptical perspectives. On the one hand, each culture, considered in itself, appeared dependent on certain sensually given and empirically ascertainable factors, which also decisively influenced its intellectual aspect in the narrower sense. On the other hand, the astonishing variety of past and present cultures became increasingly viewed as equally legitimate formations, each based on unique circumstances.[1999] Just as on the cosmological and moral-philosophical levels, the Enlighteners initially did not despair of this relativism—brought about by the rehabilitation of the sensual—but instead sought to turn it to their own advantage. If the emphasis on the causality of socio-historical sensuality or of the cultural whole was already a polemical move against the historiography of the "clerics" à la Bossuet and against the court-historiographical preference for "despots", then relativism too was deployed as a weapon against the truth-claims of orthodox theological doctrines. The principles of "Scholasticism" could no longer be declared innate and God-given if large parts of the now better-known world had no knowledge of them whatsoever. We recall[2000] that Locke made use of this argument when rejecting innate ideas, citing works of travel literature whose proliferation,

1998 *Lettres Philosophiques*, XII, cf. XXIII = *OC*, XXII, 116, 179 ff.

1999 Both aspects are indispensable for a consistent historicist approach, yet the first must be prioritized—at least in the intellectual history analysis of the Enlightenment. The major weakness of Meinecke's work on the *Entstehung des Historismus* lies in his failure to grasp this connection. He overlooks the motif of the material rootedness of cultures in the thought of the Enlightenment (not to mention their ontological or worldview presuppositions); thus the idea of individuality appears to him (one might say quite romantically) more as a metaphysical (re)discovery: not by accident does his book begin with Shaftesbury and end with Goethe.

2000 See above, Section 3 b of this chapter.

dissemination, and popularity in the 18th century were indeed characteristic of both the turn toward the socio-sensual and the comparative-relativizing attitude.[2001] The sympathetic[2002] portrayal of foreign customs and religions—deeply rooted in entirely different environments and functioning socially—already implied a devaluation of the morality and dogma of positive Christianity. But once the Enlighteners had historically-sociologically relativized their opponent's position, they shifted to direct counterattack, which entailed a reversal of their mode of argumentation, as polemical consequence began to override logical consistency. Positive Christianity was now not only rejected as relative in view of the variety of foreign religions and domestic sects (a rejection which, in itself, could only call into question its monopolistic claims and, if treated purely as a historical-sociological phenomenon, might actually serve to legitimize it), but also accused of violating universal values, ideals, and human nature. The diversity of the historical world—originally invoked to relativize and devalue the values of positive Christianity—was now, once it had fulfilled its polemical function, re-unified under a new banner: not the aegis of God, but the Enlightenment's normative worldview. Within this worldview, there was a distinguished place for "true" Christianity, which on the one hand eliminated suspicions of atheism or nihilism, while on the other hand made the crimes of

2001 La Bruyère had already beautifully and typically described the influence of acquaintance with foreign lands and cultures on religiosity, making it worthwhile to quote him: "Quelques-uns achèvent de se corrompre par de longs voyages, et perdent le peu de religion qui leur restait. Ils voient de jour à autre un nouveau culte, diverses mœurs, diverses cérémonies; ils ressemblent à ceux qui entrent dans les magasins, indéterminés sur le choix des étoffes qu'ils veulent acheter: le grand nombre de celles qu'on leur montre les rend plus indifférents; elles ont chacune leur agrément et leur bienséance: ils ne se fixent point, ils sortent sans emplette" (*Les Caractères*, XVI § 4 = p. 372). On the widely read travel literature of the 18th century, see the detailed account by Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire*, especially 65 ff. (extensive bibliography, 485 ff.). The transition from travel literature to scientific geography is described by Broc, *Géographie des Philosophes*, especially 187 ff.

2002 How deep and how tinged with skepticism this understanding could be is shown by a statement of Ferguson: "We are generally at a loss to conceive how mankind can subsist under manners and customs extremely different from our own"; we imagine other times as unbearable — "but every age hath its consolations as well as its sufferings" (*Essay*, II, 3 = p. 105).

positive Christianity—and thus the physiognomy of the concrete Christian, the actual adversary—appear all the more sinister. "True" Christianity was pitted against the positive version as the embodiment of a broader concept—namely, of rational religion or natural religion. This meant that the theological adversary could now be attacked not only from the standpoint of "true" Christianity, but also from that of other actual or imagined religions bearing the hallmarks of rational belief. The same applied to social conditions in general: since the naturally normative was not supposed to have been lost in the multiplicity of cultures, the critique of existing evils could appeal to the supposedly unspoiled natural order in other cultures—often placing the "voice of nature" in the mouth of the noble savage or the wise Chinese. Thus, the sensual dependency and diversity of cultures, and the relativistic-skeptical perspective, primarily served as arguments against the intellectualist and theological opponent. They were not meant to undermine the Enlighteners' own normative claims, especially since these claims were said to be grounded in human nature—and history, that is, the diversity of cultures, was taken to be the work of man. The question, however, is whether this man, who creates history, does so freely, or whether his actions are dependent on heterogeneous, sensual factors—as the same Enlighteners had argued in order to sever the finger of God from history. In the emerging 18th-century philosophy of history, then, two dimensions—ideal-typically considered—become equally prominent: the universal-normative and the causal-sensual-relative (or relativizing). The same conceptual constellation recurs here as on other levels: the two dimensions work together polemically while logically contradicting one another. The mutual reinforcement of causal and normative factors in the fight against a rival worldview turns into open conflict once the Enlighteners are tasked with viewing and justifying their own norms in the light of causal-sensual reality. The radical rehabilitation of sensuality opened a wound that became all the more painful after the enemy had been vanquished.

In general, it can be said that the empiricist tendency in Enlightenment historiography and theory favored a skeptical-pessimistic attitude, whereas the optimistic outlook was based on an abstraction from the normatively unpredictable diversity of the sensual

—that is, it in fact rested on an intellectualist mode of consideration.[2003] Structurally and logically, the philosophical dilemma in history mirrored that of moral philosophy. It is thus not surprising that the conceptual tools used to overcome this dilemma obeyed the same logic in both cases. Just as in moral philosophy, self-love—that is, the causal-sensual and potentially dangerous—was supposed to serve as the foundation for a purely secular normativism, so too did some Enlightenment thinkers, on the level of historical philosophy, attempt to extract the good or normative from out of the bad or causal itself; in other words, they sought grounds for optimism precisely where the inexhaustible source of skepticism seemed to lie. The sensual rootedness and therefore uniqueness of cultures was maintained, yet at the same time an internal relation between them was postulated—one that, while it must have remained unconscious to the historical actors (especially in the distant past), becomes increasingly visible the closer historical progress comes to its fulfillment. Since the realization of natural ideals stands at the peak of the ascending sequence of cultures, the causal transforms—imperceptibly but steadily—into a vehicle of the normative. Under these circumstances, the concept of the heterogony of ends spreads: individual actions serve supra-individual purposes, which are usually unknown to the agent and independent of their personal morality. Thus, the species gains the upper hand over the individual; only the species can carry and complete progress, while the individual remains limited in time and space.[2004] The heterogony of ends and its logically related prioritization of the species clearly show the cost at which the bridging of the gap between the causal and the normative on the historical level had to be bought: for what, then, is the value and status of personal moral responsibility—which the Enlighteners themselves had so highly praised—if historical progress can be realized regardless of such things? As so often, the attempt to close one argumentative gap opens another, with the polemical needs of the moment determining which of the two must temporarily be ignored.

Be that as it may: after the collapse of the traditional concept of the *lex naturae* under God's guardianship, and in view of the suspicion of nihilism, certain Enlightenment thinkers initiated a philosophy of

2003 cf. Vyverberg, *Historical Pessimism*, 107 f.
2004 Ferguson, *Essay*, I, 1 = p. 4 f.

history aimed at rescuing what is valuable into the new historical framework shaped by the new worldview; an explicit teleology or the smuggling in of normative principles as axes for structuring historical material proved unavoidable.[2005] Under the sign of its normatively conceived goal, human history is now unified: from the histories of individual peoples emerges the One all-encompassing History as an autonomous entity with its own laws. This unified history is merely the reverse side of the philosophy of history; both concepts arise simultaneously and are logically intertwined. The ancient topos of *historia magistra vitae* must die out, because from the perspective of progress, the past can no longer appear as a model but rather as a phase that has been overcome.[2006] It should not be overlooked, however, that the conviction one could draw useful lessons from history appears among prominent Enlightenment thinkers and corresponds to the truly Enlightenment position that politics, too, could be turned into a science.[2007] Yet this novel combination of the exemplary understanding of history with the concept of a general science already shows that history is no longer merely a sum of individual events from which behavior patterns might be derived in specific situations, but rather a whole, according to whose ever-valid laws human behavior ought to be aligned.[2008] The normative aspect of this behavior must, of course, be seen in its harmony with the demands of historical progress, which is itself grasped in normative categories—that is, not as the mere factual succession of one social formation by another. Thus, even the Enlightenment version of *historia magistra vitae* leads to the One History and the One Philosophy of History. These had now become indispensable. Since the individual histories, having been relativized through reference to their causal conditioning and in order to eliminate divine providence, could no longer vouch for the permanent realization of supreme norms, the One

2005 Sampson, *Progress in the Age of Reason*, 157, 158.
2006 Koselleck, *Historia magistra vitae*, especially 205 f. The emergence of this topos in antiquity and its spread especially in the 17th century is studied by Nadel (*Philosophy of History*, 292 ff., 304 ff.); according to his view, the unification of history, which caused the decline of the topos, was a result of the influence of the scientific model (312 f.).
2007 References in Stromberg, *History in the eighteenth Century*, 302 f.
2008 References in Stricklen, *The philosophe's political mission*, 176 ff.

History had to provide the longed-for guarantee. Having been detached from God, it now had to be assumed that it could accomplish this by its own power—that is, that the seeds of progress were originally planted within it, or that progress was the realization of its immanent possibilities. The structural similarity to the new biology is striking: just as in the latter, the idea of development was grounded in the thesis of the ontological autonomy and self-movement of matter,[2009] so too its application to history rested on the assumption of the independence and transformability of the human in its natural state. The idea of the Whole and the idea of development ultimately merge, and thus history reaches its completion. The paradise that one no longer wished to receive by the grace of God now had to be wrung from history itself—as long as and insofar as one was unwilling to renounce it.

b) Bayle, Vico and the Anti-Cartesian Foundations of the New Historiography

The thesis of the natural rootedness of man expresses the anti-intellectualist main current of the Enlightenment in its particular relevance to the new historiography. And since that main current appeared, not least, as a rejection of Cartesianism and mathematics, the pioneers of the new historiography also start, epistemologically, from such a rejection. In negative agreement with Descartes, they hold the diversity of cultures in their rise and fall to be scarcely mathematically comprehensible; at the same time, the observation that the mentality and morals of people depend on place and time and change accordingly had to evoke and reinforce the impression that the mind is by no means an all-powerful sovereign. It is therefore not surprising that one of the first to take mathematics to task in the post-Cartesian period was someone with a pronounced sense for the multiplicity of historical phenomena and for the resulting mutability or relativity of the mind: the skeptic Bayle. With reference to the concreteness of the historical, he claims it can reach a higher degree of certainty than mathematics; as for the object of mathematics, "fort aisé de prouver qu'il ne peut être qu'une idée de notre âme".[2010] This is a defense of the sensuous and manifold against the leveling grip of intellectualism,

2009 See above, Chapter IV Section 4 b.
2010 *Dissertation concernant le Projet*, *Dict.* IV, 2983 f.

which dissolves everything concrete into abstract signs or quantities. However, what Bayle sets against it are not cultural unities that could serve as solid building blocks for a meaningful historical whole, but rather individual facts, whose fundamentally accidental coexistence results in that chaos before which the skeptic feels justified.[2011] For this reason, Bayle does not take the decisive step toward the new historiography but remains oriented toward the traditional conception of political history and furthermore shares with the humanists both the high regard for stylistic elegance[2012] and the (against the moral sterility of mathematics directed) conviction that moral lessons can be drawn from history.[2013]

The devout Vico was no friend of Bayle's freethinking,[2014] but from the internal logic of his philosophy of history, he necessarily had to—knowingly or not—follow the historian Bayle in his anti-Cartesianism. This time, however, it was not merely isolated concrete facts that were opposed to the ahistorical mathematical intellect, but a substantive concept of culture, grounded anthropologically and epistemologically. Vico protests against identifying *method* as such

2011 This prioritization of the peculiar and individual had a very remarkable consequence in the field of the history of philosophy as practiced by Bayle. Precisely because he considers philosophical systems without regard for their cultural milieu or traces them back to the intentions of their authors, he feels entitled to subject them to purely logical criticism (Pflug, *Entwicklung der histor. Methode*, 452). Skepticism arises here because the question of truth is posed to all systems and unsatisfactorily answered. However, after the historiographical establishment of the cultural whole, skepticism arises for the opposite reason: because the question of truth loses importance when intellectual constructs are seen in their social conditionality. The concept of ideology, which precisely displaces the question of truth, gradually develops based on premises of the new historiography.

2012 Labrousse, *Bayle*, II, 31 f.

2013 *Dissertation concernant le Projet*, *Dict.* IV, 2983. The demand for objectivity raised on the next page is also a humanistic topos, although it must be assumed that Bayle, who was well acquainted with all the tricks of theological historiography (see *Dict.*, Art. *Elisabeth*, Rem. L = II, 1061 f.), had not merely a rhetorical but a purely personal, i.e., anti-theological, interest in historical objectivity (cf. our remarks on Voltaire's sense of historical objectivity in the next section).

2014 *Scienza Nuova* (1744) I, 3 and *Conchiusone* = *Opere Fil.* 462, 701: the thesis that a state of atheists would be possible is emphatically rejected.

with the *geometrical method*, and denies Descartes the right to impose a particular method—one valid only for a specific subject matter—on fundamentally different domains of knowledge: "All other subjects, apart from numbers and measures, are entirely incapable of the geometrical method." Furthermore, the geometrical method, he says, is substantively non-binding, since it has previously been used to "prove" entirely contradictory positions. Interestingly, Vico bases his rejection or relativization of the geometrical method primarily on a particular conception of cognitive capacity. Our mind, he says, does not only operate *scientifically*, but also *non-scientifically*; so if the Cartesians truly mean what they say—that method is simply the operation of our mind—then they must recognize methods that do not proceed scientifically in their sense, i.e., geometrically.[2015] Although Vico counts Locke among the allies of the utterly secular Epicurus[2016] (the contradiction between Vico's decision to remain a Christian and anti-materialist and the actual modernity of many of his views is striking here, as in many other places in his work), he still adopts Locke's thesis that the intellect does not comprise the whole of the mind—an idea of central importance to Vico's conviction that history is the work of modifications of the mind (see below). To these reflections, an empiricist epistemology must evidently be added. Vico reduces the entire ancient theory of knowledge to the claim that the pagans "believed every operation of the mind to be sensation; that is, whatever the mind does or suffers is contact with bodies." He then mentions, without explicitly accepting it, the contrary doctrine "of our religion".[2017] His subsequent remarks leave no doubt as to which of the two views he favors. Even imagination, for Vico, is not a detachment of the mind from empirical reality but a recombination of material offered by memory—material which itself was acquired through the senses. *Ingenium*, he writes, is nothing other than "the faculty of joining together what is scattered and diverse." The condemnation of Aristotelian syllogistics (which he considers actually "most useless") and of the use of geometry in physics (the English empiricist school is praised) therefore comes as no surprise to the

2015 See Vico's *Risposta* to the objections against his treatise *De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia* = *Opere Fil.*, 164 f., 167.
2016 *Vita* = *Opere Fil.*, 13.
2017 *De Antiquissima*, VII, 2 = *Opere Fil.*, 115.

reader. The only reliable principle of methodological knowledge, according to Vico, is "induction" or "the collation of similars".[2018]

Despite all his professions of theological intellectualism, Vico—just like many less devout thinkers of his time—combines his epistemological empiricism with a critique of Cartesian ontology, which, in fact, had to result in the now-familiar elevation of the *res extensa*. Regarding Plato, the Christian Vico has no objection to the dualism of body and soul or matter and spirit; on the contrary, the thesis that "abstract substances" have "more reality than corporeal ones" appears to him a sound basis for "a morality entirely well suited to civilization".[2019] But with respect to Cartesianism, he refuses to grant the same status, even though he acknowledges that Descartes appropriated this dualistic central principle of Platonic metaphysics—allegedly only to deceive Christians or to make his philosophy palatable to them! In truth, Vico says, Descartes' physics entails a materialist metaphysics, and for that reason, his philosophy is largely fatalistic.[2020] From this standpoint, the Cartesian separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* is rejected, and in its place, Vico proposes a kind of spiritualist monism that leads, however, to similar consequences as materialism (we encountered this configuration in the analysis of the Cambridge Platonists' position). Vico aims to unify God and world so that the world is not left to blind fate. Between the unmoving God and the moving *res extensa*, there exists a *media res*, "unextended, yet capable of extension," which simultaneously contains the origin of movement—i.e., the *conatus*, or force of motion. This *conatus* is already embedded in matter (which thus appears as the preliminary form of the *res extensa*, just as the *conatus* is merely the beginning of motion), for it would be false to assume that God created the world not in a simple way—i.e., bringing forth matter and *conatus* in two separate acts—instead of doing both in a single act. That, Vico says, is what Descartes failed to see. To posit *extensio* directly in God is not permitted; however, it must be that in Him there is at least the *virtus extensi*, or power of extension: "It is entirely proper, as our theologians say, to assert that the power of extension is contained *eminenter* in God." In order to secure God's presence in the world

2018 *De Antiquissima*, VII, 3-5 = *Opere Fil.*, 117, 121, 123, 125.
2019 *Vita* = *Opere Fil.*, 14.
2020 *loc. cit.*, 15 f.

against mechanistic philosophy, Vico thus links extension and motion (which amounts to a de facto elevation of extension) and seeks the root of the physical not merely in the creative act, but in the very constitution of God. This ontological hierarchy is mirrored by a hierarchy in scientific theory: "geometria a metaphysica suum verum accipit, et acceptum in ipsam metaphysicam refundit"—[2021]a formulation that, not coincidentally, directly recalls Leibniz.

The recollection of these aspects of Vico's thought is meant to support the thesis that there is a structural connection between his epistemology, anti-Cartesian ontology, and philosophy of history, in line with the general Enlightenment approach. This, in turn, emphasizes that his philosophy of history is especially grounded in core Enlightenment assumptions—above all, in the rehabilitation of sensibility. This point is sometimes overlooked, partly due to Vico's personal piety (which explains some of his more confusing or spiritualistic statements), and partly due to his obscurity in the 18th century, which is often interpreted as a discrepancy with the spirit of the age (including the notion that Vico "anticipated" that spirit). In reality, Vico only stood in tension with the intellectual environment of Naples, which was by no means representative of Enlightenment thought as a whole. At the same time, that environment influenced his views (positively or negatively) to such an extent that even his language ceased to resemble the standard Enlightenment idiom (Goethe, upon opening the *Scienza Nuova*, thought it announced "sibylline premonitions")[2022], and thus it failed to be heard beyond Naples. Now, Vico's rehabilitation of sensibility pertains primarily to *psychic* sensibility—i.e., the entire range of human faculties excluding the intellect. The decision not to see the essence of the human being in the intellect gains full weight only against the background of Vico's conviction that the historical world is created by man himself; this is for him the *"primo principio indubitato"*—the first indubitable principle—of his science.[2023] However, man does not create history like a sovereign architect who has drawn up in advance the plan of what he intends to build with all its details. History is the product of all faculties—of all possible forms of the human mind or soul—and its

2021 *De Antiquissima* IV, 2 = *Opere Fil.*, 89, 91, 93.
2022 *Italienische Reise*, entry of March 5, 1787 = *SW* 26, 224.
2023 *Scienza Nuova* (1744) I, 4 = *Opere Fil.*, 467.

specific nature can only be understood through all of them.[2024] Since history is not the work of a planning intellect, Vico's identification of *factum* and *verum*—of making and knowing—[2025]which is supposed to give historical science its absolute certainty, does *not* mean that historical knowledge can offer concrete prescriptions for action in the present (*hic et nunc*). It only means that the one who knows—in retrospect—employs the same diversity of faculties as the one who originally acted. Precisely because the historical agent does not act intellectually, historical science itself cannot proceed *more geometrico*. Vico writes that humans had religion, morality, and laws as the foundation of their historical life at least two thousand years before the philosophers and pure reason appeared; during all that time they were governed "with the certainty of authority." The new science, he says, is based on this same principle and thus wishes to be a *"philosophy of authority"*; just as human historical action rests upon it, so too does the new science rest on *"il senso comune d'esso gener umano"*—the common sense of humanity—which had fully unfolded long before any purely philosophical effort.[2026] There is thus an intimate connection between Vico's views on the totality of human faculties, the content of history, and the method of historical science. He formulates it as follows: *"questa Scienza è una storia dell'umane idee, sulla quale sembra dover procedere la metafisica della mente umana"*—"this Science is a history of human ideas, upon which the metaphysics of the human mind ought to proceed.[2027]"

In reality, the intellect contributes nothing vital to history; it merely translates what has already been created into its abstracting language. The indispensable ideological foundation of society—religion—owes its origin both negatively and positively to the activity of the passions: negatively, because the destructive passions, that is,

2024 *ibid.*: "ritrovuare la guisa dentro le modificazioni della nostra medesima mente umana."

2025 The theological origin of this principle as well as its secularization since Bacon has been examined by Löwith, *Vicos Grundsatz*, especially 160 f., 171 ff. Mondolfo traces its roots back into ancient philosophy (*Il Verum-Factum prima di Vico*, 9 ff.), and shows its importance for Renaissance thought through examples from Ficino, Leonardo, and Cardano.

2026 *Scienza Nuova* I, 4 = *Opere Fil.*, 467 f.

2027 *ibid.*, 466.

the *"immane fierezza e sfrenata libertà bestiale"* (immense fierceness and unbridled bestial liberty), must be tamed; and positively, because the weak human being's need for protection must find expression in fear of God.[2028] Although the intellect gradually gains ground and even comes to dominate the final phase of each historical cycle—namely, the age of humans, which follows the ages of gods and heroes—this rule leads to no lasting balance. Instead, it marks the beginning of the end: *"la barbarie della riflessione"* (the barbarism of reflection) proves even crueler than *"la prima barbarie del senso"* (the first barbarism of sense), and the final phase of the *corso* is followed by the first phase of the *ricorso*. Religion once again gains the upper hand, and people return to *"la premiera simplicita"*, and thus *"pietà, fede, verità"*, which are the natural foundations of justice, return among them.[2029] The guidance of the passions by the intellect is unnecessary, since the passions carry within themselves their own logic or rationality, one that differs entirely from the intellectualist understanding of reason. The socio-historical channeling of the passions does not require people to grasp the objective meaning of their actions and ideologies (if they had such a capacity, they would be above their passions and would shape history by completely different means); rather, people allow themselves to be led by certain spiritual constructs whose content has nothing to do with objective truths, yet which embody the truth insofar as they successfully channel the passions. One of the most prominent of these constructs is the *"morale poetica"* (poetic morality). The mythical poet creates Jupiter, and the people believe in this god—who is, in fact, a fiction, but a meaningful or true one.[2030] The human senses or passions, upon which belief in the fiction is based, may be *"false in their material"* but are *"true in their form,"* and this kind of truth is precisely the one appropriate to such a human nature.[2031] (Given the relative irrelevance of the myth's content—despite the primacy of mythic thinking in general—Vico does not associate the emergence of Christianity with any fundamental upheaval in the course of history.)

2028 *ibid.*, 464; cf. I, 2 § 31 = p. 440.

2029 *op. cit.*, *Conclusione* = *Opere Fil.*, 699 f.

2030 What approaches to a sociology of knowledge are contained in this view is discussed by Stark, *Vico's Sociology of Knowledge*, especially p. 301 ff.

2031 "the logic conforming to their nature," *Scienza Nuova*, II, 3 = *Opere Fil.*, 519.

Human belief in the mythical fiction is certainty; the function of this belief is truth. There is thus a deep relationship between truth and certainty, since truth cannot come into effect without certainty or fiction. Truth—that is, the objective course of history and its sustaining mechanisms—is only recognized at the level of (socially unnecessary or unusable) philosophy, whereas the forms that human certainty takes are the object of philology (in Vico's broad sense). Just as truth and certainty are entwined at the level of history, so too are philosophy and philology entwined at the level of knowledge: this is the double ontological and epistemological dialectic of *vero* and *certo*,[2032] which is, at its core, a direct polemical rejection of the Cartesian identification of truth with certainty and clarity.[2033] Had Vico not rejected Cartesian intellectualism and dualism, he never could have arrived at this fundamental premise of his philosophy of history. And, as always in the Enlightenment, the rejection of intellectualism is merely the reverse side of the rejection of dualism: the rational and purposeful is found in the mythical-sensuous just as *res cogitans* is found in *res extensa*.

The same structure is evident in the intertwining of divine providence and the course of history. Providence is indispensable as a guarantee for the purposeful channeling of the passions,[2034] that is, it is indispensable precisely because the passions—something inherently blind—constitute the raw material of history. At the same time, however, it does not stand above the material of history, nor does it guide it from without; rather, it acts from within, so that in the end, it no longer appears as an autonomous or arbitrary power, but merely as the internal logic of the balance that has been achieved at any given stage. Vico sees providence as a historical fact (his science "*dee essere una dimostrazione, per così dire, di fatto istorico della provvedenza*") and understands it not as an unmediated intervention into human affairs, but as being identical with their course: it works "*per vie tanto facili quanto sono i naturali costumi umani*" (by ways as natural as human customs themselves).[2035] This is the basis of Vico's conviction that his conception of providence eliminates both fate and chance.[2036] All of

2032 *op. cit.*, I, 2 § 9 = *Opere Fil.*, 434.
2033 On this, Belaval, *Vico and Anti-Cartesianism*, especially p. 82 ff.
2034 *Scienza Nuova*, *Idea dell'Opera* = *Opere Fil.*, 379.
2035 *op. cit.*, I, 4 = *Opere Fil.*, 465.
2036 *op. cit.*, *Idea dell'Opera* = *Opere Fil.*, 381.

this is not covert atheism (at least not in Vico's view), but rather the necessary consequence of rejecting the strict separation between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* for a theist who reflects on totality. The notion of divine providence as understood by someone like Bossuet could no longer seem plausible—even to devout eyes—in the atmosphere of Enlightenment anti-Cartesianism. Nonetheless, it was in the inner logic of intellectual development that a theistic approach shaped by Enlightenment principles would necessarily produce conceptual structures that precisely mirrored those found in atheistic or anti-religious frameworks. The heterogony of ends,[2037] as claimed by Vico, was around the same time a central element in Mandeville's thinking ("private vices, public benefits"), and would later, via Hegelianism, become a central motif of the materialist philosophy of history. Moreover, the theist Vico had taken the decisive step in the direction of the Enlightenment: he consistently linked his anti-intellectualism with the primacy of the cultural whole, which proved to be the indispensable domain within which the heterogony of ends was to play out. But the pantheon of culture ultimately became the most powerful adversary of the One God: to embed him into totality was the first step toward replacing him *with* totality as the true world principle —just as his entanglement with space or matter had been the first step toward the ontological autonomy of the latter.

The most significant difference between Vico and the philosophy of history of the later Enlightenment is generally seen to lie in his rejection of the idea of a *happy end* to the course of history. There are *corsi* and *ricorsi*—cycles of rise and return—but no permanent final state, no Kingdom of God on Earth, is anticipated here, even though Vico would by no means deny the Kingdom of God in Heaven as the ultimate end of history. I would suspect the reason for this position lies in Vico's pessimistic anthropology. The *corrotta natura* of man[2038] does not allow for a straightforward progress in history—and at the same

2037 Thanks to his Hegelian training, Croce very clearly understood and described the importance of the heterogony of ends or of human illusions for the operation of providence through purely natural means (*Filosofia di Vico*, 116 ff.). However, it must be doubted that Vico's concept of providence reaches a conscious "critique of the transcendence of the divine" (120); see Löwith's remarks in *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*, 118 f.

2038 *Scienza Nuova*, I, 4 = *Opere Fil.*, 464.

time, it makes divine providence necessary as the guiding force of history. Without providence, nihilism in the philosophy of history would be inevitable given the nature of humanity. Vico shares Hobbes' anthropology in many respects but refuses to share his nihilism, and thus he opts for providence. Pessimistic anthropology, belief in providence, and the unfinished nature of history as such are, from this perspective, intrinsically connected. Vico must remain a Christian, because he believes both in original sin—which prevents a redemptive ending to history on Earth—and in divine providence, which nonetheless grants history its meaning. To these fundamental Christian aspects of his thought are joined the Enlightenment's core premises, and the resulting intellectual structure—though internally coherent and consistent—must still appear ambiguous when considered against the main thrust of Enlightenment thinking; the strongly divergent element here is anthropology. On the other hand, the conceptual tools Vico deploys to resolve the nihilistic implications of this anthropology are constructed in such a way that their Christian origin is overcome by their Enlightenment structure. Divine providence is so intertwined with human action that it eventually resembles nature; providence and the human realm intermingle just like the normative and the causal do in the Enlightenment concept of nature. And just as in Enlightenment (non-nihilistic) thought the intertwining of the causal and the normative inevitably leads to a conflict between the two, Vico—since he shares the Enlightenment's foundational assumptions—finds himself entangled in similar difficulties. The question arises: what meaning or value does moral, subjectively honest behavior retain if providence is able to channel even the most "inhuman" passions toward its ends, thereby achieving its plans through them? Vico can justify and demand personal morality as a Christian, but not as a philosopher of history. Because the Christian demand is self-evident to him, he does not even pose the question above in his historical writings. And since in his system it is precisely divine providence that assumes the functions the Enlightenment assigns to nature, the higher instance before which the individual remains morally accountable also stays intact. Yet the conflict, superficially concealed here, breaks out openly in those cases where the universal-normative is derived from (human) nature, such that any persistent and obvious irrationality in the causally unfolding history must inevitably cast doubt on the power

of the secular universal-normative. How is this new normative authority to be grounded, given the frequently meaningless-seeming causal unfolding that is nonetheless supposed to serve the normative in the grand scheme? Vico's Christian faith spared him this question;[2039] the less pious had to suffer through it.

c) Voltaire's Palinodes

Voltaire is not the father of the new historiography, even though the renown he had already gained in other domains as an intellectual authority of the Enlightenment decisively contributed to its breakthrough; if stricter standards are applied, he can even be seen more as a popularizer than a pioneer.[2040] The intellectual-historical significance of precursors like Lenglet-Dufresnoy or Espiard[2041] (not to mention Montesquieu's *Considerations* of 1734) must be emphasized all the more, as the historian Voltaire did not initially represent the new direction, as evidenced by the prominent presence of humanist motifs in his *Histoire de Charles XII*.[2042] However, both this turn in Voltaire's historical work and his contributions to the new historiography—or rather his philosophical wavering between the causal and the normative, between despair and confidence—have a highly representative value. We already know[2043] that Voltaire formulated the methodological principles of the new historiography and simultaneously laid bare its substantive implications and preconditions. These methodological principles, thus understood, are meant to provide the historian with a guiding thread that enables him to navigate the confusing multiplicity of historical events. A philosophical conception of history therefore guides the actual work of historical inquiry, and it is based on two premises: that miracles are *a limine* excluded, i.e., that the sources must conform with the course of

2039 On the conflict between relativism and Christian faith, which Vico, however, does not seem to feel as such at all, see the good analysis by Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 73 ff.
2040 Cf. the balanced judgment by Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian*, 166, 168 f.
2041 This significance is rightly emphasized by Wade, who also reports concisely on the works of the two mentioned authors, *Voltaire*, 461 ff., 497 ff.
2042 On this, see Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian*, 15 ff.
2043 See this section under a).

nature[2044] in general and human nature[2045] in particular; and that historiography, in general, serves a moral purpose—[2046]especially since it is itself morally inspired.[2047] Both premises have direct consequences for source criticism. Voltaire endeavors to *demythologize* transmitted history in his sense, that is, to unmask the lies and legends that had been circulated for religious or dynastic purposes.[2048] Because the tradition was said to serve such ends, its refutation is *eo ipso* a polemical act against its beneficiaries. When it comes to such issues, Voltaire shows particular interest and is willing to go into great detail: here he finds abundant and concrete evidence for the cunning and malice of clerics and despots throughout the ages. Since, in this way, source criticism and moral-propagandistic intent often coincide, Voltaire has no sense that his own demand for objectivity[2049] might somehow contradict his moral-propagandistic aims. (There is, however, an even deeper reason for this confidence, rooted in the very logic of normativist thinking: since the objective validity of the moral stance being advocated is taken as self-evident, the validity of a historiography that serves this same stance is also supposed to be objectively established.) Without doubt, his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, for example, constitutes "a work of fervent humanitarian proselytism,[2050]"—which is exactly what stirred Diderot's enthusiasm.[2051] Yet beyond the occasional happy alignment of polemic and source criticism, we should also keep in mind that Voltaire, not only out of concern over censorship but also to preserve his general historical credibility, had to keep his propagandistic zeal within certain —though not overly tight—bounds.[2052]

Voltaire opposes Bossuet's belief that history is governed by divine providence in accordance with its fixed plans by offering two

2044 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Histoire* = *OC*, XIX, 359.
2045 *Des Mensonges Imprimés* = *OC*, XXIII, 439.
2046 *Pyrrhonisme de l'Histoire*, XVI = *OC*, XXVII, 266; cf. *Pensées* etc., XXI, 119.
2047 *Concl. et examen de l'Essai* = *OC*, XXIV, 475: "l'humanité l'a dicté etc."
2048 Details on Voltaire's critical treatment of falsified sources in Sakmann, *Probleme der historischen Methodik*, 334 ff., 366 ff.
2049 *Supplément au Siècle de Louis XIV*, II and III = *OC*, XV, 124, 136, 141.
2050 Lanson, *Voltaire*, 128.
2051 Letter to Voltaire from 28.11.1760 (= *Corresp.*, III, 275).
2052 Brumfitt, *History and Propaganda*, 275, 280 f., 283.

types of arguments. On the one hand, he emphasizes the unpredictability of the course of history, which he traces back to two factors: the sudden, inexplicable emergence of great men who give events a new direction—by, for example, resisting the forces of evil —[2053]and the operation of chance, or the small, often ridiculous causes of epoch-making events[2054] (the function and symbolic value[2055] of the anecdotal in Voltaire's historiography is consciously tied to these historical-philosophical positions).[2056] On the other hand, Voltaire counters the unexpected, miraculous interventions of God in history by appealing to "notions naturelles"[2057] and demanding historical understanding based on the "philosophie naturelle"[2058] exemplified by physics. In other words: against the unification of history under the binding *aegis* of a divine plan, Voltaire highlights the power of fortunate or unfortunate chance—or of the secularized miracle—while against those miracles, which are supposed to prove the divinity of that plan and serve as its instruments, he invokes the concept of natural law, including the thesis of human nature's naturalness. Both types of arguments complement each other in their polemical intent but cannot be reconciled logically. More than that: each contains an implicit aspect that directly contradicts Voltaire's own normative foundation—the very one that inspired his anti-theological polemic and, consequently, these same arguments. This highly complicated and contradictory relation between the logical and the polemical explains Voltaire's *palinodes*—his rhetorical recantations or backpedaling. If the immanent force of chance disempowers divine providence, its dominion, in turn, renders history a hopeless chaos, where, in Voltaire's own words, humans are blind tools in the cruel game of Fortuna.[2059] Though this Fortuna, as Voltaire later clarifies, is identical with the iron necessity of fate, it remains an inexplicable, dark power—thus differing essentially from rationally comprehensible natural law. Similarly inexplicable, or "accidental," in relation to

2053 *Essai* CII = *OC*, XII, 161.
2054 *Siècle de Louis XIV*, XXIII = *OC*, XIV, 408.
2055 Thus Lanson, *Voltaire*, 121.
2056 *Siècle de Louis XIV*, XXV = *OC*, XIV, 421.
2057 *Essai*, Introduction = *OC*, XI, 28.
2058 *Nouvelles Considérations sur l'Histoire* = *OC*, XVI, 138.
2059 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Theodose* = *OC*, XX, 513.

"true"—i.e., normatively conceived—human nature is the human *sottise* (foolishness), which flourishes in the chaos of history and perpetuates it, so that history may be described as a "tableau des sottises humaines"[2060] or a "un ramas de crimes de folies et de malheurs".[2061] Voltaire ought to have asked himself what was gained—in strictly normative terms—by the expulsion of divine providence from history, if he accepted the dominion of chaotic chance precisely in order to accomplish that expulsion.

Voltaire's *notions naturelles*, despite standing in opposition to the concept of chance, are just as ambivalent in their logical consequences. Insofar as they are meant to bar arbitrary divine interventions in the course of history, they are purely causal; yet their strict causality threatens to crush the normative aspect of nature, which is precisely what provides the standards for the sovereign condemnation of human *sottise*. Even within the basic unit of the new historiography—the cultural totality—there reigns a manifold causality; it encompasses geographic factors, sociopolitical organization, and prevailing ideology. All of these determine the human spirit, whose character cannot therefore be understood in an intellectualist way, but only by delving into the culturally conditioned character of its causal origins: "Trois choses influent sans cesse sur l'esprit des hommes: le climat, le gouvernement, et la religion; c'est Ia seule maniere d'expliquer l'enigme de ce monde".[2062] Yet all three foundational factors of culture are evidently mutable. Climates, governments, and religions vary—[2063]and while climates differ from place to place, the variability of government and religion is tied to both place and time. Given that the human mind admittedly depends on such factors, it can neither recognize nor realize absolute values. Against this dangerous relativism, Voltaire sets the normatively tinged concept of (human)

2060 Letters to Formont from 13.6.1755 and to Thieriot from 29.2.1756 = *OC*, XXXVIII, 395, 557; cf. letter to d'Argental from 8.11.1755, on p. 502 of the same volume.

2061 *Essai* CXCVII = *OC*, XIII, 177.

2062 *loc. cit.*, 178.

2063 It is obvious that the idea of a truly universal history, which Voltaire defended against Bossuet's restriction to Jews, Greeks, and Romans (*Essai*, Avant-Propos = *OC*, XI, 158 and others), could only increase the risk of getting lost in multiplicity and relativity.

nature: humans are the same everywhere "*par les passions et par Ia raisonuniverselle qui contre-balance les passions*".[2064] This human nature is not meant to be discovered merely in its historical modifications—it is fixed in advance as a pure type whose normative dimension allows it to serve as a compass for the historical journey—or as a standard against which the truth of the factual is measured: "*Ce qui n'est pas dans Ia nature n'est jamais vrai.*"[2065] From this vantage, Voltaire often judges the accounts of travelers and historians—though not without revealing the relentless historicity of what, for him, holds the status of the natural-universal. For instance, he simply declares the report that there is no private property in India to be untrue, arguing that "*ce serait ... contre la nature*":[2066] here, nature is equated with European bourgeois property law. Though Voltaire holds that judging foreign customs based on one's own is illegitimate,[2067] he does so characteristically when polemicizing against the universal claims of Christian moral standards. He shows far less understanding for cultural autonomy or the relativity of values when he measures them against rational postulates. Even his stance toward "superstition" is ambiguous: he can disdainfully dismiss it from a causal-relativist standpoint, in line with the cultural-totality framework, yet at other times he recognizes it as just another ideologically conditioned form[4].[2068]

The indecisiveness of Voltaire the historian is linked to the uncertainty of Voltaire the moral philosopher. Following Locke, and thus in Hobbes's footsteps, he had early adopted the view that morality consists in what is socially useful under given circumstances —but that its content can vary greatly according to time and place.[2069] The relativist implications of this position he countered, however, by defending a single morality[2070] and the *raison universelle*,[2071] whereby the universality of reason was tied to the assumption of the constancy

2064 *Essai* CXLIII = *OC*, XII, 370.
2065 *Essai*, Introduction, XI = *OC*, XI, 36.
2066 *Essai* CXLIII = *OC*, XII, 371.
2067 *Essai*, VI = *OC*, XI, 208.
2068 Rosenthal, *Voltaire's Philosophy of History*, 161 ff.
2069 *Traité de Métaphysique*, IX = *OC*, XXII, 224 f.
2070 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Morale* and *Aristote* = *OC*, XX, 111 and XVIII, 371.
2071 *Essai*, Introduction VII and CXLIII = *OC*, XI, 23 and XII, 370; *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Nécessaire* = *OC*, XX, 118 f.; *Poème sur la Loi Naturelle*, II = *OC*, IX, 446 ff.

of human nature, normatively understood, as the permanent seat of that reason. If the emphasis is placed not on the historically conditioned modifications of human nature, but on its unchanging essence, which is said to contain definite predispositions toward morality, then the philosophy of history gains its optimistic foundation and simultaneously its confident outlook: *"nous voyons un amour de l'ordre qui anime en secret le genre humain ... C'est un des ressorts de la nature, qui reprend toujours sa force: c'est lui qui a forme le code des nations.*[2072]*"* But if human nature has always been the same, the question arises: why was the moral rational order not realized earlier—why only now, at this point in human history? In response, the focus shifts from the *essence* to the *modifications* of human nature. These are attributed to the psychic layers affected by sensibility in nature and in history. Both these layers, as well as geographical and socio-historical sensibility, had been elevated in the struggle against intellectualism and against the divine "finger" in history; now, however, the delayed realization of reason's commands had to be explained by their influence. The previous disregard for nature is thus interpreted to mean that the essence of human nature had been veiled by its modifications. *"L'instinct, plus que la raison, conduit le genre humain,"* Voltaire writes,[2073] as he surveys the panorama of history. That human *sottise*, which from the viewpoint of a purely normative conception of human nature had appeared as an inexplicable, accidental aberration, now seems to find a causal explanation after the historian has lingered upon the immeasurable diversity of geographical and social conditioning, of relativity and transience. Yet the causal—that is, the factual—acts as a paralyzing force upon the normative, even though the latter, by the very definition of nature, ought to guide and animate the causal flow of events. Voltaire, resigned, now regards "*enchaînement fatal des causes qui entratnent les hommes, comme les vents poussent les sables et les flots.*[2074]"

Thus, Voltaire oscillates—since he cannot bring the logical consequences of his polemically conceived foundational position under theoretical control—between reason and historical relativity, between the essence and modification of human nature, in short,

2072 *Essai* CXCVII = *OC*, XIII, 180.
2073 *Essai*, Introduction XI = *OC*, XI, 35.
2074 *Essai* CXCVI = *OC*, XIII, 169.

between the normative and the causal.[2075] Accordingly, he remains undecided between the idea of progress and that of catastrophe, hinting at or asserting both views in different contexts without examining either in depth. Although he does understand historical progress—because it is supposed to be driven by innate human rationality—as the movement of the human spirit toward the full unfolding of its potential, his claim that he is only interested in history *qua* progress of the spirit[2076] should be interpreted in a very broad sense. For Voltaire also speaks in several places of the progress of industry and commerce, not merely as a side effect of spiritual awakening at the dawn of modernity, but as a phenomenon with its own momentum and limitless possibilities.[2077] Progress has many faces for him and unfolds simultaneously on multiple levels that are bound together within the cultural whole—even though the progress of the spirit in art, literature, and science naturally draws his special attention. From a polemical standpoint, focusing mainly on intellectual progress is also appropriate if the ultimate meaning of progress is supposed to be the triumph of reason over "superstition".[2078] But from that point of view, progress must appear very slow—[2079]slow and asymmetrical, as shown by the considerable cultural differences not only between nations, but also among members of the same nation.[2080] In general, however, the fact of progress is not questioned, especially (and tellingly) when Voltaire looks to modern developments:[2081] these, he sometimes claims, reach such a height in the eighteenth century that

2075 Already v. Martin noticed that Voltaire's philosophy of history is dualistic. "Its one root is naturalism, the other the idea of reason. Causality and teleology" (*Motive und Tendenzen in Vs Geschichtsschreibung*, 5). Unfortunately, however, he devoted his essay more to polemic against Voltaire than to a genetic explanation of the observed dualism.

2076 Thus Dagen, *Histoire de l'esprit humain*, 305.

2077 *Concl. et Exam. du Tableau Historique* = *OC*, XXIV, 475. An almost complete listing of Voltaire's statements on progress in various fields is provided by Delvaille, *Idée du progrès*, 307 ff., 329 ff.

2078 *Remarques de l'Essai*, III = *OC*, XXIV, 548.

2079 *Essai*, Introd. X = *OC*, XI, 29.

2080 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Homme* = *OC*, XIX, 383 f.

2081 The goal of the *Essai* was to show the transition from medieval barbarism to the "politesse du notre temps", *Remarques de l'Essai*, II = *OC*, XXIV, 547.

the ultimate universal triumph of reason appears assured.[2082] Nonetheless, such statements remain historically unsupported, as Voltaire does not dare, on the basis of historical material, to trace a linear development of humankind toward the reign of reason. On the contrary: while the—despite setbacks—continuous progress is asserted for the period after the "Middle Ages," his remarks concerning history as a whole often move within the framework of catastrophe theory. This theory holds that eras of developed culture are followed by times of barbarism[2083] and apparently applies to all peoples.[2084] Western history, according to Voltaire, has seen four great cultural epochs,[2085] although—unlike the first two (classical Greece and Augustan Rome)—the latter two (the Renaissance and the *siècle de Louis XIV*) are not separated by a long barbaric interval; both belong to modernity, whose beginning seems to mark a stabilization or acceleration of the tempo of progress. Yet this is only implied; the boundary between statement and wish remains blurred, and nowhere is it stated explicitly that the catastrophe theory applies only to the distant past and has been reversed by modernity. Thus, the catastrophe theory is not theoretically abandoned—especially since it is tied to the persistent skepticism that arises from the insight into the strictly causal linkage of events and from the acknowledgment of the scope and causes of human "sottise" (foolishness); indeed, Voltaire refers to cultural epochs as "quelques temps hereux" in the midst of that "ramas de crimes et de folies" that history is supposed to be.[2086] But if this view of the rich harvest of human folly leads naturally to the catastrophe theory, then conversely, the establishment of a consistent theory of progress would require the *philosophy-of-history* legitimation of "sottise" via the *heterogony of ends*. Voltaire never reached that insight. His historical image remains caught in the "brutal contraste des ténebres et de la lumiere",[2087] and for that reason he is not the father of the mature idea of progress—but Turgot is.

2082 Letter to Helvétius from 27.10.1760 = *OC*, XLI, 40 f.; letter to d'Alembert from 26.6.1766 = *OC*, XLIV, 319.
2083 *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Miracles* = *OC*, XX, 85.
2084 *Remarques de l'Essai*, I = *OC*, XXIV, 545.
2085 *Siècle de Louis XIV*, I = *OC*, XIV, 155 f.
2086 *Essai*, CXCVII = *OC*, XIII, 177.
2087 Dagen, *La marche de l'histoire*, 261.

d) Montesquieu between Natural Law and Determinism

The conflict between the causal and the normative takes on a peculiarly classical form in Montesquieu, precisely because here the thought strives to be systematic and comprehensive,[2088] i.e., it claims, among other things, to grasp both the normative and the causal aspect of the problem of law. It would be wrong, as many of Montesquieu's contemporaries believed, to think that his normative statements were a fig leaf behind which a determinism of the purest kind sought to hide. On the contrary; they are coImpletely sincere[2089] and arise from a sober reformist will that strives for closeness to reality based on empirically secured knowledge of facts. For Montesquieu, the fundamental compatibility of scientific and reformist intentions is established from the outset. Although this conviction was not enough to bring about the logical agreement of the scientist and the reformer within him, paradoxically it very often made possible the factual independence of the two from each other over the course of Montesquieu's long work. Namely, in the belief that scientific knowledge could not harm well-meaning reform plans anyway, Montesquieu was able to pursue the investigation of causal chains free from moral concerns and as an end in itself, which also satisfied purely theoretical needs that lay much deeper in him than, for example, in Voltaire.[2090] The fact that Montesquieu was unable to achieve (even theoretically) the harmonization of causal inquiry and normatively shaped reform intent is thus all the more instructive in terms of intellectual history and logic because the ideal of such harmonization, despite occasional skeptical remarks suggesting an inner conflict, genuinely hovered before him.

2088 See *EdL*, Preface, the paragraph: *"J'ai posé les principes..."* Only through the principles, which enable a systematic treatment, does the diversity of social and historical events gain its meaning: *"quand j'ai découvert mes principes, tout ce que je cherchais est venu à moi"* (*OC*, I (I), lix and lxij).

2089 On Montesquieu's reformist ideas in detail see Waddicor, *Montesquieu*, 134 ff.

2090 This is shown in Montesquieu's ability, when necessary, to distinguish facts and judgments much more clearly than most Enlighteners, see for example *EdL* XVI, 4 (= I (I) 353): *"je ne justifie pas les usages; mais j'en rends les raisons."*

Now, Montesquieu's attempt at harmonization rested—trivially, one might say—on an ambiguity in the basic concepts he used, such as, for example, the concept of law. Building on earlier statements,[2091] Montesquieu opens his main work with a normative-natural law interpretation of his definition of the concept of law. Laws are "rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses"—but such rapports also underlie morality or *équité* and exist, even if only as possibilities, already before any positive legislation.[2092] The considerable deviation of human behavior from the normative *rapports nécessaires* Montesquieu explains by the limitation of human intelligence or the predominance of passions; at the same time, however, he does not see in the deficient socio-historical realization of the *a priori* normative possibilities any reason to abandon the striving for approximation to them through religion, morality, and positive legislation.[2093] Thus, the decisive question arises of mediation between supra-historical and positive law, and Montesquieu seeks to address it through reference to that One "raison humaine" which governs all peoples and whose applications are supposed to be the positive laws of the individual nations.[2094] Yet this indication is not further explained, and moreover, it appears precisely in a context in which Montesquieu discusses the manifold dependence of positive legislation on the concrete overall situation of a nation—thus placing the weight not on the generality of the normative, but on the particularities of the causal. That these could stand in the way of the former is suggested by Montesquieu himself, as he pointedly follows the reference to the One Reason with the remark that, given the particularity of each people, "un très grand hasard si celles [les lois] d'une nation peuvent convenir à une autre." What is called the spirit of the laws, again, is not at all connected with the One (normative) Reason, but arises from the

2091 Above all *Lettres Persanes* LXXXIII = *OC*, I (III), 170: *"la justice est éternelle et ne dépend point de conventions humaines."* Significantly, Montesquieu already considers here the possibility that this view could be false: yet *"ce serait une vérité terrible,"* especially since belief in eternal justice provides support in life. The long, purely causal excursions in the *Lettres* about demographic factors, for example (CXII-CXXII), already here contrast with the sweeping normative statements.

2092 *EdL*, I, 1 = *OC*, I (I), 2 f.

2093 *loc. cit.*, 4 (final paragraph).

2094 *EdL*, I, 3 = *OC* I (I), 8.

interplay of constitution, geography, economy, demography, religion, and custom.[2095] Montesquieu's concept of spirit is, in other words, rooted in the anti-intellectualist, anti-Cartesian mainstream of the Enlightenment,[2096] that is, it takes into account the sensory-conditioned, even rooted nature of the spirit, and thus represents the opposite of the One, unchanging Reason that exists before every positive law—and therefore also before the spirit of the laws, which, according to Montesquieu's terminology, relates to positive laws. Not only on the level of method is it the case that Montesquieu treats the *prima causa* intellectualistically, but the *causae secundae* empirically;[2097] also on the level of being, *prima causa* and *causae secundae* are distinguished from each other in a similar way as the supratemporal intellect and the socially-causally arisen and shaped spirit. Accordingly, the concept of law means two things: on the one hand, the ideal natural order, which is supposed to ontologically bear the normative and whose unimpeded functioning would be the only guarantee for the realization of naturally justified postulates; and on the other hand, the equally constant effect of empirical causes, indifferent toward norms, from which always the same results emerge. The natural and the positive—that is, the result conditioned by empirical causes—can no more be reconciled with each other than the mentioned concepts of law can. *Νόμιμον* and *διακαιον* diverge.[2098]

Montesquieu by no means has the feeling of having landed in a dead end. He derives the spirit of the laws from a variety of factors, some of which are evidently subject to human influence; the possibility of such influence is also supposed to offer nature its – greater or lesser – chance. Not least with this in mind, Montesquieu emphasizes among forces this possibility of purposeful human action. The remarks in the famous chapter on the influence of climate on the intellectual and

2095 *loc. cit.*, 9; cf. XIX, 4 = *OC* I (1), 412.

2096 Just as with Vico or Voltaire, Montesquieu's demarcation against Cartesianism is also a logical prerequisite of his historiographical and sociological stance. This demarcation also takes place in Montesquieu both on the methodological-epistemological level (his statements against the mathematical method of Descartes are summarized by Stark, *Montesquieu*, 1 ff.) and on the ontological level (on his early critique of the separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* see Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française*, 453).

2097 Shaddeton, *Montesquieu*, 42.

2098 Brunschvicg, *Progrès de la conscience*, 493 f.

moral character of peoples[2099] could give the impression of a one-sided determinism – and indeed have often done so – yet Montesquieu simultaneously emphasizes that not in all cultures are the same factors equally important. Since nature and climate almost exclusively determine the life of savages, while elsewhere customs and constitution gain the upper hand,[2100] it is the task of the legislator to give the "causes morales" precedence over unfavorable "causes physiques".[2101] In playing the former off against the latter, Montesquieu believes he has found a balance, thereby hoping to escape both blind determinism and the unscientific denial of causality.[2102] The only question is whether Montesquieu is able to break the deterministic circle without a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος. In truth, this is already contained in the expression "causes morales," whose ambiguity results from the fact that now the first, now the second word can be foregrounded. In opposition to the *causes physiques*, however, the *causes morales* are primarily *morales*, thus effects of a deliberating subject; and yet there are important passages where *causes morales* and *causes physiques* stand together under the broader heading of "causes générales," in that they combine against chance, which Montesquieu famously wishes to exclude entirely from his socio-historical analysis.[2103] Precisely this wish shifts the emphasis to the first word of the expression "causes morales" and lets the deterministic viewpoint prevail anew exactly where it ought to be secondary. Indeed, it is hard to see why the effect of *causes morales*, such as traditional, i.e., unreflectively accepted, customs, prejudices, or religious conceptions, should lead the spirit of a society's members to greater autonomy than, say, the effect of climate. The effect of *causes*

2099 *EdL*, XIV, 2 = *OC*, I (I), 305 ff. The role played by climate theory in the aesthetic, political, and medical literature of 18th-century France has been described by Mercier, who also points to its connections with the skeptical attitude (*La Théorie des Climats*, especially 20 ff., 159 ff.).

2100 *EdL*, XIX, 4 = *OC*, I (I), 412.

2101 *EdL*, XIV, 5; XIX, 27 = *OC*, I (I), 311 f., 432f. Perhaps Montesquieu was thinking of Machiavelli's remarks in *Discorsi* I, 1.

2102 Montesquieu already early placed great emphasis on avoiding both evils simultaneously. The effect this double concern had on the development of his perspective is shown by the fine genetic analysis by Dedieu, *Montesquieu*, 60 ff.

2103 Expressly, this hierarchy of concepts appears in the *Considérations*, Chap. XVIII = *OC*, I (III), 482, see the paragraph: *"Ce n'est pas la fortune..."*

morales does not *ipso facto* mean strengthening of free will and thus breaking the deterministic circle, but only that the determinants are of an ideological character; seen in this light, the *causes morales* do not (always) stand in the way of the *causes physiques* but can, on the contrary, serve them as vehicles: "car souvent la cause physique a besoin de la cause morale pour agir".[2104] With knowledge of this interplay, Montesquieu does not oppose all moral causes to the physical ones, but only those brought forth by the activity of the rational legislator; hence he also carefully distinguishes between customs and laws, attributing the former to the overall life of the nation, the latter to the will of the legislator.[2105] But that is a distinction, not the desired mediation. The historical-sociological analysis stops short at the will of the legislator, who appears almost as standing outside of partisan interests and ideologies.[2106] How the legislator can escape such influences and connect with the One "raison humaine," Montesquieu does not say; as a pioneer of the sociology of knowledge, he portrays the dependence of mentality and worldview on physical and social factors so vividly[2107] that the greatest skepticism regarding such a capacity for detachment must seem appropriate. (An example of unintended, i.e., ideologically conditioned bias was given by Montesquieu himself when he portrayed his ideal monarchy from the standpoint of his own political and social preferences.)[2108] What is meant here, however, is not that detachment which, as a prerequisite for a cold-blooded calculation of the factors of political play, is not only possible but indeed indispensable for every realist of power. The detachment of the natural law-motivated legislator must be qualitatively different, for it is dictated not merely by a content-altering instrumental rationality, but precisely by constant reference to firm norms. Thus, Montesquieu's dilemma also takes the form of an unclear conceptual distinction between political technique

2104 *Pensées*, 811 = *OC*, II, 238.
2105 *EdL*, XIX, 12 and 14 = *OC*, I (I), 418, 420.
2106 See the good observations by Gurvitch, *Sociologie juridique chez M.*, 624 ff.
2107 See the excellent analysis by Stark, *Montesquieu*, especially chapters VII–IX, 86 ff. Stark aptly summarizes Montesquieu's personal situation when he writes that Montesquieu "is not happy about the relativism in which he, nevertheless, believes" (186).
2108 Althusser, *Montesquieu*, 92 ff., 104 ff.; Ehrard, *Idée de Nature*, 494 f.

and politics grounded in natural right. On the basis of his descriptive science, Montesquieu can serve political technique well. To turn natural law politics into a prescriptive science, however, he does not succeed. This impotence sometimes hides behind the fact that he colors advice, which actually pertains to political technique, in natural law tones, thereby creating the impression that the project of a prescriptive science has been realized.

The logical difficulties of Montesquieu's position can also be seen in what he does not mention. Although he recommends to the reasonable legislator to counteract the unfavorable effects of climate, he apparently has no advice for him regarding the loosening of the other fundamental causal relationship, which he believed he had discovered between the spatial size and the form of government of a state. If the large territory necessarily entails despotism, the medium monarchy, and the small democracy,[2109] then the universal realization of political reason, which is supposed to be inherent in human beings as such, is excluded from the outset, unless one divides the large states. Despite his sincere belief in the possibility of handling flexible regularities in the sense of reason, Montesquieu cannot guarantee a universal triumph of reason. Is a form of government like the English one conceivable for Asia, whose inhabitants must also possess human reason? No, answers Montesquieu, and this no applies for all eternity: "*La puissance doit donc être toujours despotique en Asie. Car, si la servitude n'y était pas extrême, il se ferait d'abord un partage que la nature du pays ne peut pas souffrir*".[2110] These insurmountable limits, to which Montesquieu pointed, seemed to his critics to be more decisive than the freedoms he conceded, which the rational activity of the legislator was supposed to exploit — and they were not entirely wrong about that. It sounded almost cynical when Montesquieu, with regard to countries whose inhabitants, because of the warm climate, were not willing to work readily, found slavery less shocking to reason.[2111] He then wrote, however: "*Mais, comme tous les hommes naissent égaux, il faut dire que l'esclavage est contre la nature, quoique dans certains pays il soit fondé sur une raison naturelle*"—but even this correction again contained the fatal ambiguity: for in it "nature" is initially used in a normative

2109 *EdL*, VIII, 16–19 = *OC*, I (I), 164 ff.
2110 *EdL*, XVII, 6 = *OC*, I (I), 375.
2111 *EdL*, XV, 7 = *OC*, I (I), 332.

sense and then in the sense of a merely causal connection ("raison naturelle"). Indeed, the concept of nature — just like the concept of law with Montesquieu — appears not coincidentally, but almost programmatically in a double meaning, whereby that dualism of his view, which arises from the loosening of the causal for the sake of the normative, turns into a dualism that coincides with the direct conflict of causal and normative.[2112]

The value-free, i.e., purely causal concept of nature is now supposed to designate the "*structure particulière*[2113]" of a thing. In this sense, despotism too has a nature,[2114] although its essence directly contradicts normative nature.[2115] Apparently, something behaves according to nature — but according to which nature? What, for example, is a despot supposed to do in order to act according to nature? "*Quand il ne peut pas anéantir à l'instant ceux qui ont les premières places, tout est perdu,*" says Montesquieu,[2116] adding that despotism would be "*imparfait*" if it renounced terror.[2117] Should a despot in China be humane, especially since despotism in his country is admittedly unavoidable? Or should he shape this form of government as perfectly as possible — whereby this perfection, according to Montesquieu, would no longer be a moral but a technical norm? Perfection in a structural-technical sense appears in Montesquieu not only when he speaks of the nature of a form of government but also when he speaks of its principle.[2118] This principle is defined without value judgment and judged purely functionally; it is therefore entirely possible that what is good for one form of government is harmful for another, for example: "*l'ambition est pernicieuse dans une république. Elle a de bons effets dans la monarchie*"[2119] : here a particular passion is seen

2112 It would be an optical illusion to think that Montesquieu escapes the latter dualism with the help of the former, as Aron, for example, does (*Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*, 53 ff.). Similarly Lanson, *Études*, 149 f., 153.
2113 *EdL*, III, 1 = *OC*, I (I), 25.
2114 *EdL*, II, 1 = *OC*, I (I), 10.
2115 *"Le despotisme cause à la nature humaine des maux effroyables," EdL* II, 4 *OC*, I (I), 22.
2116 *EdL*, III, 9 = *OC*, I (I), 35 f.
2117 *EdL*, III, 11 = *OC*, I (I), 38.
2118 On the relationship between the two see III, 1 = *OC*, I (I), 25.
2119 *EdL*, III, 7 = *OC*, I (I), 34.

not as a virtue or vice, i.e., not normatively, but solely in its function. The principle of a form of government understood in this way stands in direct connection with its laws,[2120] and therefore Montesquieu was not convincing when he claimed that the latter were merely *"les cas particuliers où s'applique [la] raison humaine"*.[2121] How could one have believed this assurance from him, when the same Montesquieu, at the beginning of the same chapter, in agreement with the abominable Hobbes, declared that positive laws were decreed as a result of the effects of a double war ("*de nation à nation"* and "*dans chaque société"*)? If the laws are not the realization of the good or of reason but the limitation of evil, then every law can be regarded as good insofar as it at least puts an end to the war of all against all. But that was how Hobbes thought, and Montesquieu was not willing to follow him all the way.[2122]

Montesquieu's wavering between natural law and determinism corresponds to his indecision on the question of progress.[2123] Montesquieu knows very well social change and historical becoming as facts, and he also knows which factors are involved in it. But for him, becoming does not mean progress, but rather decadence, deviation from the principle of the constitution.[2124] Even the reasonable reform that Montesquieu envisions is not integrated into a broad schema of progress, thus not viewed as a subjective contribution to an objectively advancing overall movement of history. This attitude seemed to confirm the accusations made against Montesquieu, although it actually reflected the same logical difficulties that Voltaire, for example, could not overcome either. However, Voltaire was too well known as a fighter for anyone to accuse him of fatalism or paralyzing skepticism — despite pessimistic outbursts and despite *Candide*. The embarrassing paradoxes that kept resurfacing in their manner of argumentation, which they could not strictly logically penetrate, nevertheless disturbed the Enlighteners to such an extent that they were constantly searching for a scapegoat who could bear the

2120 Books IV–VII of *EdL* are dedicated to this complex.

2121 *EdL*, I, 3 = *OC*, I (I), 8.

2122 On Montesquieu's ambivalent relation to Hobbes see Dedieu, *Montesquieu*, 64 f., 118 f.

2123 The word *"indecision"* is used by Delvaille, *Idée du progrès*, 295.

2124 Hubert, *Devenir historique chez M.*, 608 f.

suspicion of nihilism and thereby relieve the Enlightenment as a whole. This task was naturally assigned above all to the materialists, but Montesquieu was not spared either, especially since what was classified as fatalistic in his work seemed to amount to an open justification of the existing order. In the preface to *Esprit des Lois*, after all, stood the ominous sentence: "*Je n'écris point pour censurer ce qui est établi,*" which could actually have been interpreted more as a word of understandable caution, had the theses of the book not increased the fears for the fate of the normative. Without doubt, the deterministic component in Montesquieu's work was an important logical reason for his skepticism toward profound or revolutionary reforms[2125] (leaving aside the political-ideological reasons here). The mistrust against him, however, lay beyond concrete positions in the striking difference of his style of thought compared to the normativist flights of many of his contemporaries. This shows itself very clearly in the remarks about the historian Voltaire, which he wrote down in *Mes Pensées*: "*Voltaire n'écrira jamais une bonne histoire: il est comme les moines, qui n'écrivent pas pour le sujet qu'ils traitent, mais pour la gloire de leur ordre.*[2126]" Voltaire, for his part, did not miss the opportunity to accuse Montesquieu of the opposite. His antipathy toward the general direction of *Esprit des Lois* was revealed in his almost sophistical attempt to enumerate all possible errors of the book with regard to factual realities.[2127] Naturally, he also questioned the decisive influence of climate and the spatial size of a state on its form of government.[2128] According to him, Montesquieu's book has not helped and cannot help, because there is actually only one remedy: to change all laws thoroughly—[2129] obviously meaning their radical adaptation to the commandments of reason. Rousseau thinks similarly about Montesquieu: he had actually not thought about the "*principes du droit politique,*" but had only concerned himself with the "*droit positif des gouvernements établis*".[2130]

e) Origin and Structure of the Consistent Idea of Progress in Turgot and

2125 Vyverberg, *Historical Pessimism*, 167.
2126 No. 1446 = *OC*, II, 419.
2127 Especially in the so-called *Commentaire* = *OC*, XXX, 404 ff.
2128 *L'A, B, C* = *OC*, XXVII, 315 f.
2129 Letter to Perret from 28.12.1771 = *OC*, XLVII, 579.
2130 *Émile*, V = *Œuvres*, IV, 836.

Condorcet's Characteristic Deviations from It

The reactions to Montesquieu show the unease that the ever-smoldering and often erupting conflict between the causal and the normative caused among the Enlighteners.[2131] It was Turgot who first attempted to escape the dilemma by establishing a developmental schema within which precisely those elements were to function as engines and guarantors of historical progress that had constantly threatened it or seemed to nourish catastrophe theories. We have already seen them at work in Voltaire: on the one hand, human *sottise* or the predominance of blind instinct rooted in sensuality, and on the other hand, the undeniable fact of the *Middle Ages,* that is, a total and long-lasting victory of *"superstition,"* such that no more could be said of linear progress. Turgot now counters these through the concept of the heterogony of ends, according to which even *sottise* unintentionally serves progress, and through a remarkable rehabilitation of positive Christianity, which cannot be separated from the *Middle Ages.* However, clearing the way for the idea of progress still required something else: the conceptual detachment of the historical from the strictly causally functioning, unchanging whole of nature. Because of its naturalization, as carried out through the thesis of human nature and the special emphasis on geographical factors, history threatened to dissolve into the uniformity and constancy of natural law. As a mere part of nature, it could only be an eternal recurrence of the same.[2132] The widespread desire to imitate the model of natural science in all fields could strongly suggest the temptation of such a static view of history — which, *mutatis mutandis*, would be a precursor of modern history-hostile sociology. Above all, Montesquieu's approach gave the impression of a far-reaching subjugation of social history to natural

2131 Gibbon took Montesquieu's side, see Trevor-Roper, *Historical Philosophy*, 1678 ff. Trevor-Roper rightly recognizes in the contrast between the two tendencies expressed in the assessment of Montesquieu the internal division of Enlightenment historiography as a whole.

2132 It should nevertheless be remembered that the supporters of the Moderns used the uniformity of nature as an argument against the uniqueness of antiquity (see Fontenelle's digression in Krauss' text selection, 147 f.). Such arguments were, however, only meaningful, or at least atmospherically favorable, to the idea of progress within the then-existing constellation. Later, especially in view of natural determinism, they became almost dangerous.

determinism, namely in the double sense of emphasizing geographical factors and assuming a causality that remains the same and always produces the same. In order to pave the way for the idea of progress, Turgot now strictly separates nature and society. "*Les phénomènes de la nature, soumis à des lois constantes, sont renfermés dans un cercle de révolutions toujours les mêmes,*" while in contrast the "*succession des hommes*" in history gives the philosopher the impression of constant progress or growth.[2133] However, this sharp separation threatened to entirely hollow out nature as the bearer of unchanging norms and thereby to displace a fundamental concept of the Enlightenment.[2134] Thus, Turgot once again resorts to constant, but now normatively understood nature in order to justify his thesis that all peoples must pass through the same stages of development, and thus to assert the one and binding, normatively conceived goal of total development: "*La nature n'est-elle donc pas partout la même? et si elle conduit tous les hommes aux mêmes vérités, si leurs erreurs mêmes se ressemblent, pourquoi ne marchent-ils pas tous d'un pas égal dans cette route qui leur est tracée?*[2135]". Thus, in order to finally, that is, ontologically, secure the normative, Turgot reintroduces through the back door the connection between nature and history that he had questioned when it was a matter of underpinning the idea of progress; the ambiguity associated with the concept of nature therefore continues to exist, since Turgot draws the line between nature and history only with regard to empirical-causal, not normative nature, without being fully clear about it.

Against Montesquieu, Turgot explicitly invokes the normativist concept of nature,[2136] and at the same time he tries to theoretically weaken Montesquieu's natural determinism. He plays down the

2133 *Tableau Philos.*, *Œuvres*, I, 214 f.

2134 Its most extreme form is known to be taken by Rousseau, who makes the same distinction between nature and history as Turgot — but with opposite intention: Turgot wants to enable progress, Rousseau to explain degeneration. For him, history is a fall from nature — but it does not end there. Rousseau envisages the possibility and necessity of a historical-cultural activity in service of returning to nature (on the concept of *"art"* in this sense in Rousseau see Dagen, *Histoire de l'esprit*, 291 f.). Here, progress is precisely the return.

2135 *Tableau Philos.*, *Œuvres*, I, 217.

2136 Even twenty years later, he calls the thesis that there is no "single natural order" a "sottise" on which allegedly Montesquieu's work rests, see the letter to Du Pont from 13.3.1771, *Œuvres*, III, 447.

importance of natural factors like climate, race, etc., and instead values the "*causes morales*" more highly. In doing so, he also makes methodological considerations: one should only explain something through physical causes when the moral ones are not sufficient for an explanation, and at the same time he wants the effect of the former to be understood rather indirectly: they would not directly influence a noticeable total result, but rather the factors that produced this result.[2137] Even biological differences are, for him, at least scientifically irrelevant, since their cause must remain unknown; therefore, everything depends exclusively on education, which alone can be the object of a systematic effort.[2138] He also warns against overestimating the difference of national characters and against generalizations in this regard.[2139] Naturally given factors are (from place to place) variable and at the same time (over time) constant. In both respects, they hinder the uniform progress of history. Turgot now replaces them with magnitudes by which progress becomes visible, even almost measurable. One important among them is technology. However many setbacks the "*sciences spéculatives*" or "*goût*" may suffer in history, the achievements of technology remain untouchable, because they pass into everyday life through "*commerce.*" On the other hand, technology serves the development of the natural sciences (manufacture of instruments for experimentation, etc.) and the humanities (the art of printing).[2140]

By now establishing a progress in this sense even in the Middle Ages,[2141] Turgot finds a way to incorporate into the general concept of progress that epoch which threatened to shatter it. After all, in the struggle against positive Christianity and *Scholasticism*, it had been necessary to paint the Middle Ages in the darkest possible colors.[2142] But if, compared to the Greek *miracle* or Roman vitality, it represented a serious regression, then one could no longer meaningfully uphold

2137 *Recherches sur les causes*, etc., *Œuvres*, I, 140.
2138 *loc. cit*., 139.
2139 In a fragment from the year 1751, *Œuvres*, I, 338.
2140 *Recherches sur les causes*, etc., *Œuvres*, I, 118, 121.
2141 *loc. cit*., 119, 133, 137; cf. *Tableau Philos.*, *Œuvres*, I, 230.
2142 Typical statements in Varga, *Das Schlagwort vom "finsteren Mittelalter"*, 116 ff. Cf. Voss, *Das Mittelalter*, 75 ff., 180 ff.

the idea of an uninterrupted or necessary progress in history. One could not support the ideal of reason in terms of historical development, for otherwise one would have had to make too great concessions to the theological opponent. Turgot now proceeds differently. He not only sets almost neutral standards, like technology, which require no concessions in matters of worldview, but also goes so far as to point to the civilizational achievement of Christianity. Although he speaks of the *barbarie* of the Middle Ages, he does not place it into a one-sided causal connection with the establishment of Christianity, but knows to report on the preservative work of the Church in those times, as well as on the moral progress that the teaching of Christianity represented compared to ancient immorality or cruelty.[2143] With regard to the still strong *obscurantism,* Turgot naturally does not go too far in this direction, yet, as later examples — above all those of Herder and Hegel — show clearly enough, a consistent view of historical development was impossible without a rehabilitation of Christianity. Fontenelle had already sensed this.[2144] Turgot, however, marks a programmatic turning point in this question. We would understand his willingness to make concessions toward positive Christianity or the *Middle Ages* if we recalled how urgently the normativist Enlightenment needed a convincing idea of progress. For only it could fulfill an important, double ideological function: to explain the previous non-realization of the reign of reason (the time was only ripe at the end of a development) and at the same time to present the imminent realization of it as inevitable (the reign of reason being the due product of the inner dynamic of a whole long development).

The concept of the heterogony of ends forms, as said, alongside this rehabilitation of Christianity, the other cornerstone of Turgot's groundbreaking conception of progress. Until then, it had mainly been associated with Mandeville's analysis of social equilibrium as a harmony arising automatically from countless apparent disharmonies, especially since Vico's achievement was still unknown. Turgot now transfers it from social synchrony to the entirety of diachrony and thus evaluates it in the sense of the idea of progress; only through this does

2143 *Discours sur les avantages que l'établissement du christianisme*, etc., *Œuvres*, I, 199, 201 f., 208 f.

2144 Krauss, *Mittelalter in der Aufklärung*, 224 ff.

it gain its explosive force for the philosophy of history in the second half of the 18th century — and, through the connection to Hegel, also the 19th century. Its appeal lies in its ability to transform, in almost alchemical fashion, everything that seems to make progress impossible into a factor promoting progress, and thereby to prove the inevitability of progress *a priori*. What could resist reason if the irrational itself unintentionally contributes to the realization of its goals? And what could prevent the final victory of the normative if the causal itself automatically brings it about? The irrational is now — objectively — permeated by reason, the causal, from the perspective of total historical meaning, is no longer blind. Human *sottise* or passion, illusion, or even immorality are no longer obstacles but motors of the overall movement — which, however, can only be assumed based on an aprioristic certainty about its direction and conclusion. In possession of this certainty, Turgot does not hesitate to legitimize everything in its totality that, according to his own moral standards, should have aroused offense: for in the view of the concept of the heterogony of ends, it is not the subjective intentions, by which the morality of the individual is measured, that count, but only the objective, unforeseen or unintended consequences of his actions. The philosopher of history who operates according to this concept may therefore allow himself sovereign amorality in particular cases because he moralizes history as a whole by leading it into the reign of reason. Even wars are now, for Turgot, not (only) reprehensible or disastrous, for "*la lutte ... a augmenté les lumières et les talents de tous.*[2145]" And since everything necessarily drives progress forward, the only prerequisite for it is that something happens among humans at all; only apraxia, not "bad" praxis, can paralyze progress: "*Ce n'est point l'erreur qui s'oppose aux progrès de la vérité, ce ne sont point les guerres et les révolutions qui retardent les progrès du gouvernement, c'est la mollesse, l'entêtement, l'esprit de routine et tout ce qui porte à l'inaction*".[2146] The flipside of this thought is the mentioned identification of activity and progress: "*Les passions tumultueuses, dangereuses, sont devenues un principe d'action, et par conséquence de progrès*".[2147] From every change, advantages must

2145 *Œuvres*, I, 284.
2146 *Recherches sur les causes*, etc., *Œuvres*, I, 133.
2147 *Œuvres*, I, 283 f.

result.[2148]

It is the common view about Condorcet that he, on the whole, adopted Turgot's idea of progress and expanded it into a grand historical tableau with prophetic pathos.[2149] Such a misjudgment is inevitable if the decisive role of the concept of the heterogony of ends for the consistent idea of progress is not taken into account. But it is precisely this concept that is missing in Condorcet. With his firm, orthodox normativist belief that moral, intellectual, and historical progress would coincide, a concept in which the subjective-moral and the objective-historical at least before the realization of the reign of reason so painfully diverged had to remain alien to him. He therefore does not speak at all of an objective effect of the irrational in the sense of the purposes of reason, but thinks directly in terms of the struggle against it.[2150] The constant struggle extending throughout all of history becomes necessary because the basic forms of superstition already appear at the first forward steps of the human race, only to be handed down from generation to generation.[2151] Accordingly, each historical epoch (apart from the utterly dismal *Middle Ages*) is portrayed as a highly charged unity, within which a bright, progressive side emerges as the effect of ascending reason, and a dark side as the respective modification of old errors, coexisting in hostility. The "*corruption de la raison*" is indeed "*une suite presque nécessaire des progrès,*" since the possibility of error only arises with the adventures of the awakened and seeking human spirit,[2152] but it remains nonetheless a sad phenomenon and does not become the vehicle of progress. Progress occurs not because it secretly enlists error in its service, but because reason proves itself — relatively in each individual historical phase and absolutely in the final phase — to be stronger. Thus, progress remains directly connected at all times with reason, morality, and science. Reason is the driving force of progress, not merely its result; and thus, modernity too, for example, begins

2148 *loc. cit.*, 285.

2149 See e.g. Bury, *Idea of Progress*, 206 f. Bury does indeed note the different evaluation of Christianity by Condorcet and Turgot but is unable to explain it. He also completely misses the problematic of the heterogony of ends.

2150 *Esquisse*, Introduction = *Œuvres*, VI, 22.

2151 *Esquisse*, I^re^ époque = *Œuvres*, VI, 29.

2152 *Fragment de l'histoire de la 1re époque* = *Œuvres*, VI, 378.

with the rebellion against priestly rule.[2153] Only against the background of these assumptions does Condorcet claim the continuity and straightness of progress, which, although it may proceed faster or slower due to accidental events, can never be reversed.[2154]

Thus, the idea of progress is oriented toward the model of the development of mathematics and the natural sciences — as this development appeared in the eyes of an Enlightenment-minded scholar like Condorcet at the time. He himself says that the advance of the human mind, "*si souvent caché et si irrégulier dans ses autres travaux,*" would appear in mathematics "*plus simple, plus à découvert, et assujetti à un ordre plus méthodique*".[2155] The mathematization of progress thus becomes the ideal goal, whose realizability Condorcet believes in because history, just like nature, obeys laws:[2156] if the rationality of mathematics and natural science ultimately rests on the immanent rationality of nature, then the inner lawfulness of history must at least in the future make the mathematization of progress possible as well. Now, by emphasizing, directly following d'Alembert,[2157] the model character of the development of mathematics and natural science for historical progress, Condorcet indirectly reinforces his distinction from the concept of the heterogony of ends and thus also his one-sided, combative attitude toward error and superstition: for science can (at least according to Condorcet's view) forge its path not through, but only against error. Thus there is a logical connection between Condorcet's philosophical difficulties regarding history and his orientation toward the mathematical ideal of progress. The direct and, for all historical phases in varying degrees, applicable identification of progress and reason forbids a legitimization of the *Middle Ages,* and thereby opens a considerable gap in the linear conception of progress. From the standpoint of reason, Condorcet can hardly explain how this

2153 *Esquisse*, VII^e^ époque = *Œuvres*, VI, 125.

2154 *Esquisse*, Introduction and II^e^ époque = *Œuvres*, VI, 13, 39.

2155 *Discours sur l'astronomie*, *Œuvres*, I, 484.

2156 *Esquisse*, X^e^ époque = *Œuvres*, VI, 236.

2157 On d'Alembert's conception of progress see Dagen, *Histoire de l'Esprit*, 363 ff. Cf. Condorcet's words about d'Alembert in his *Discours de Réception à l'Académie*: *"le philosophe profond, à qui nous devons le tableau le plus éloquent des progrès de l'esprit humain"* (*Œuvres*, I, 404 ff.).

very long *"époque désastreuse"*[2158] could even have been possible. Characteristic of his theoretical helplessness at this point is that he flirts with catastrophe theory.[2159] The difference between his and Turgot's conception of progress thus becomes striking. And while Turgot anticipated Comte's three-stage law,[2160] Condorcet had to endure from that very same Comte the reproach that his Enlightenment-revolutionary prejudices against the achievements of the (Christian) past had prevented him from developing a contradiction-free schema of progress.[2161]

The comparison between Turgot's and Condorcet's conceptions shows that the consistent idea of progress did not by any means arise merely from the transfer of mathematical-natural scientific models of development onto the entire movement of history, although it undoubtedly absorbed the confidence in progress that specifically related to the development of science.[2162] Just as little can it be claimed that it owed its decisive impulse to the positions of the Moderns in the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* — even if we disregard the fact that it appears there rather incidentally or as an auxiliary construction.[2163]

2158 *Esquisse*, VI[e] époque = *Œuvres*, VI, 109.

2159 See the *Avenement*, which was intended to serve as a preface to the *Esquisse*, *Œuvres*, VI, 281: he wanted to present the *"traits généraux"* of the different epochs of the human spirit, in which *"tantôt ses progrès, tantôt sa décadence"* would become apparent.

2160 Delvaille, *Idée de progrès*, 398 ff.

2161 *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, IV, 205 f.; cf. VI, 259 f. Sorel also emphasized Turgot's theoretical superiority over Condorcet; he refers not only to Turgot's legitimation of Christianity but also to his remarks on the role of technology and its advances even in the Middle Ages (*Illusions de Progrès*, 225 ff.).

2162 In Dagen's words: the idea of the progress of the human spirit *"a emprunté à l'histoire des sciences la certitude du progrès de l'esprit et de l'efficacité de la pensée physico-mathématique"* (*Histoire de l'Esprit*, 251). Brunetière has very perceptively pointed out the connection between the new self-confidence and feeling, as it expresses itself in the anti-ascetic attitude toward life, and that optimistic worldview which also sustains the belief in progress (*Formation de l'Idée de Progrès*, especially 210 f.). The development of the concept of the progress of the human spirit was also furthered by genetic epistemology (Dagen, *Histoire de l'Esprit*, 69 ff.) — another reason to relativize the importance of natural-scientific models. Condorcet also refers to genetic epistemology or Locke in this sense (*Esquisse*, Preface and IX[e] époque = *Œuvres* VI, 22, 182 ff.).

2163 Even commentators who attach great importance to the *Querelle* for the

In reality, important theoretical aspects of the *Querelle* are merely a continuation of the philosophical problematics of history associated with the early modern thesis *veritas filia temporis.* We know that this thesis had been formulated by representatives of the new natural sciences and even earlier by humanists.[2164] The supporters of the Moderns, above all Fontenelle, were inspired by the scientific concept of progress of Cartesianism,[2165] yet at the same time they moved within the framework of humanistic ideas—[2166]which was inevitable given the humanistic, not natural-scientific origin of the *veritas-filia-temporis* thesis. However, the humanistic position wavered between the assumption of the maturity of the modern age and the exemplary value of antiquity. Both assumptions could not easily be logically reconciled, yet they were jointly directed against the Middle Ages: insofar as antiquity represented the antithesis of the Middle Ages, it remained an unsurpassable model; but insofar as the invocation of antiquity served as a call to new, autonomous life or as the first step toward it, the *imitatio* of antiquity gives way to *aemulatio* — competition with it is sought, but only with this model, embodying very specific values, and with no other. The idea of a linear progress, implied in the *aemulatio* thesis and finally flowing into the *veritas-filia-temporis* thesis, is nevertheless overlaid, given the needs of the struggle against the Middle Ages, by catastrophe theory or a cyclical view of history — especially since the *veritas-filia-temporis* thesis could and indeed had to be interpreted in the sense of a superiority of the Middle Ages over antiquity. Precisely because the supporters of the Moderns follow the humanists, they waver just as much between belief in the advancing self-liberation of human reason and a cyclical image of history.[2167] They adopt the idea of *aemulatio* and preference for modernity over antiquity, as they do not radically question the validity

development of the idea of progress, such as Bury (*Idea of Progress*, 125), admit this.

2164 See above, Chapter II.

2165 Delvaille, *Idée de Progrès*, 210 ff., 224 f.; Brunetière, *Formation de l'Idée de Progrès*, 237 ff.

2166 See the essay by Baron mentioned in Chapter II.

2167 Thus Jauss, *Ursprung und Bedeutung der Fortschrittsidee*, 62; very rightly Jauss regards as the intellectual-historical result of the *Querelle* the antagonism between the idea of perfectibility and the historical or relativistic sense, 71 f.

of universal aesthetic standards, which had been violated by the Middle Ages; their relativism or historical sense suffices to legitimize the Moderns and to relativize the achievements of the Ancients accordingly — but not to rehabilitate the Middle Ages.

Our result is: the consistent concept of progress begins where the wavering between a linear and a cyclical view of history, which had persisted since the early modern period, ceases. But it was neither the positions of the Moderns nor the idea of progress pronounced under the impression of the scientific upswing that brought this wavering to an end: for even this idea had to resort to catastrophe theory to eliminate, if necessary, the ambiguity of the *veritas-filia-temporis* thesis or to explain the supposed regression of the natural sciences during the Middle Ages. Condorcet's philosophical position on history is instructive in this regard. Although it, through its prophetic pathos, considerably influenced further intellectual history, it still belongs logically-structurally to a constellation of thought that had been overcome by Turgot. Since the perspective initiated by Turgot — again: logically-structurally, not by way of direct literary influence — found its development and culmination in Herder, Hegel, and the philosophy of history of the 19th century, its conceptual axes also deserve special attention. First, Turgot's struggle against the extreme relativistic consequences of historical determinism, as they had become evident in Montesquieu, must be emphasized. Thus, the consistent idea of progress arises not least as a systematic, not merely a confessional defense against value nihilism. The rehabilitation of geographical and socio-historical sensuality, in which determinism and relativism were rooted, thus forms its first, albeit initially negative, precondition. The second lies in the decision not simply to throw progress-hindering factors onto the scrapheap of history via catastrophe theory, but to transform them into factors promoting progress — that is, to account for relativism in a fundamentally new way. This occurs through the concept of the heterogony of ends, whose central significance for the consistent idea of progress should be sufficiently demonstrated by the discussions of Hegel or the Marxists.[2168] In itself, this concept means that human activity brings

2168 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, Introduction = *Werke* IX, 25 ff.; Engels, Letter to J. Bloch from 21/22 September 1890 = *MEW* 37, 464; Plekhanov, *Monistische Geschichtsauffassung*, 123 f. (cf. *Beiträge*, 33, 62).

about historical results that are unforeseen, unintended, and thus completely independent of subjective goals and motives, and therefore it can be interpreted in the sense of a relativistic-skeptical view.[2169] But its function changes drastically when it is connected with belief in a predetermined goal of historical movement: now it means that the objective direction of events — that is, leading to the named goal — is not affected by any subjective error, and that thus the realization of the goal is absolutely certain and necessary.
At this decisive point, the consistent idea of progress crosses paths with the theological concept of providence: for this too was based on the assumption that God uses a variety of human intentions, indeed weaknesses, for the realization of his plans without the persons concerned being aware of it.[2170] The omnipotence of providence was supposed to be proven by its ability to place even the works of the devil at the service of its own plans — just as now the inevitability of the victory of normative reason is justified by the unconscious effect of the irrational or of blind causality in its favor. The structure of thought and the style of thinking that supports it are identical in both cases — despite all differences in the content of thought. Thus it was no accident — and this must be finally underlined — that the consistent idea of progress was not carried out by its originator, the nationally oriented economist Turgot, who was not particularly metaphysically interested or gifted, but by those thinkers who believed in a radical theodicy: by Lessing, Herder, and Hegel.[2171]

2169 It will not have escaped the reader that in this work the effect of the heterogony of ends in precisely this sense has already been mentioned several times.

2170 Bossuet, *Discours*, III, 8 (= II, 315 f.). Löwith already pointed out the similarity between this view and Hegel's theory of the ruse of reason (*Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*, 133 f., cf. 97 f.: "The distinction between the observable actions and the hidden motives of historical events goes back to the theological distinction between the will of God and the will of man. It is the basis of the two-dimensionality of salvation history and world history, on which theological understanding of history rests."). Very eloquent is Comte's praise of Bossuet's philosophy of history — *"malgré l'inévitable prépondérance du principe théologique"* (*Cours*, VI, 253 f.).

2171 See below, Chapter VIII, section 3b-c.

5. The Polemical and Existential Aspect of the Oscillation between Optimism and Pessimism

The preceding analysis has shown that the logical root of skepticism and pessimism lay in the basic approach of the Enlightenment itself, namely in the rehabilitation of sensuality. Skepticism, therefore, is not limited to thinkers like Hume;[2172] it is not so much a clearly defined, homogeneous philosophical movement alongside others, but rather a necessary, even if often only implicit, aspect of all directions of thought in the Enlightenment — apart from the relatively few who accepted the logical difficulties of unadulterated optimism[2173] and devised a corresponding ontology or anthropology. It is only this factual omnipresence of skepticism that explains the intense interest in it, as expressed in the almost obligatory positive or negative statements about it. The usual mixture, even if differently dosed in each case, of pessimistic skepticism and optimistic normativism can only be surprising if one overlooks the highly significant fact in intellectual history that almost all the insights and convictions that gave rise to skepticism, when it came to the logical justification of Enlightenment ideals themselves, simultaneously provided the ideological weapons that could be used in the fight against traditional theology and thus awaken confidence in future victory, i.e., optimism. It was natural to let the former aspect be overshadowed by the latter. If the rehabilitation of sensuality brought to light the manifold dependence of the mind and thus provoked moral skepticism, the emancipatory side of anti-ascetic morality and the cooperation of body and soul was emphasized on the other hand. If the diversity of cultures cast doubt on the power of a single Reason, the ability of humans to shape their history without interference from

2172 In his essay "Scepticism in the Enlightenment," Popkin rather superficially identified skepticism in the Age of Enlightenment almost entirely with Hume, claiming that the other Enlighteners, in their pure optimism, paid little attention to him; only in Kant's work, supposedly, was Hume's philosophical achievement (critically) evaluated. No information is given here about the specific preconditions and reasons for skepticism, whose relevance in the eighteenth century Popkin himself notes.

2173 See Section 1 and 3c of this chapter.

divine arbitrariness was, conversely, asserted. If the individual appeared small and weak amid the inescapable laws of nature, confidence was nevertheless voiced in the possibility of recognizing the laws of nature and putting them at the service of man, without wishing or striving for the unrealizable, namely their violation through prayer and miracles. Even epistemological skepticism — which had to result from the devaluation of the intellect and the obvious inability of experience or induction to reach ultimate truths within foreseeable time by collecting and evaluating all facts — was compensated for as much as possible by the reflection that at least something certain was now known, that one no longer chased after phantoms. These are the reversals of argumentation through which the norms of the Enlightenment sought to assert themselves. The Janus face of (normativist) Enlightenment developed in simultaneous apology and polemic, in the simultaneous fight against "Scholasticism" and against the suspicion of nihilism. The Enlightenment was, in other words, forced to move between extremes, and to transform the nihilistic poison with the same ease into a remedy against the theological disease, just as before the supposed panacea against the plague of "priests and despots" had imperceptibly turned under their own hands into a suicidal nihilistic poison.

From this double perspective it becomes understandable why skepticism in the circles of normativist Enlightenment could not only be hidden and unpleasant but also open, self-confident, even aggressive. For it had proven itself all too well in polemic for one to want or be able to easily dispense with it. We know what role the phenomenalism and agnosticism of a d'Alembert or a Maupertuis played in settling accounts with theological metaphysics.[2174] The seemingly modest, if not resigned, renunciation of the knowledge of ultimate ontological truths aimed at declaring engagement with the opponent's most precious intellectual goods practically meaningless. Precisely to call into question the absolute claim to truth of theology, Voltaire casts doubt on the human mind's ability to know everything: "Êtes-vous donc des dieux qui savez tout?", he asks the theologians.[2175] This function of skepticism was recognized early and clearly, as a statement by Shaftesbury about the skeptics shows: "They

2174 See above, Chapter IV, Section 2b and Chapter V, Section 2b.

2175 *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article "Ame" = *Oeuvres Complètes*, XVII, 169.

imagine that by this general Scepticism, which they wou'd introduce, they shall better deal with the dogmatical spirit"[2176] — and it is telling that the same Shaftesbury, under certain circumstances, is prepared to engage in that very game whose mechanism he understood; for while he earnestly warns against the dangers of "endless Scepticism," especially speaking from the standpoint of his firmly established optimistic ontology,[2177] he has nothing against skepticism directed at scholastic dogmas and controversies.[2178] Moreover, skepticism in the sense of Cartesian radical doubt had generally been felt as liberation from the pressure of authority and as a call to independent inquiry (this was actually what conservatives could never forgive Descartes for, even when they occasionally drew on his intellectualism). Thus Diderot writes—who, by the way, skillfully knows how to use a modest agnosticism to neutralize God—:[2179] "Le scepticisme est donc le premier pas vers la vérité"—[2180]but it should not remain the last step if one did not want to pass from active skepticism into passive nihilism. However, the opposite danger could also arise from a skeptical attitude, namely fideism, whose alliance with skepticism had been no rarity since Montaigne's time.[2181] In the apologetics of the 18th century, the reference to the limits of the human mind continued to emerge as an important argument.[2182] From their point of view, too, skepticism was to be the first step toward truth — but toward the truth of faith. To avoid this conclusion, the normativist Enlightenment had to step beyond skepticism in a different direction than toward faith, thus renouncing programmatic skepticism and asserting certainties that could not and must not be the certainties of faith. Thus, if it did not venture too far in the skeptical direction, it was not only because of the suspicion of nihilism, but also out of fear that it might fall back into the arms of theological orthodoxy. A double position is adopted in order to be polemically and argumentatively equal to the double

2176 *Characteristics*, I, 95.
2177 *op. cit.*, I, 82; cf. II, 208, 230f.
2178 *op. cit.*, III, 76.
2179 *Lettres sur les Aveugles* = OC, I, 308. Regarding the use of agnosticism to neutralize God, see our remarks in the second subsection of this chapter.
2180 *Pensées Philosophiques*, XXXI = OC, I, 140.
2181 See above, Chapter II, Section 3b.
2182 Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers*, 132f., 103f.

position of the opponent. Just as for the latter skepticism, in view of the finiteness of the human mind, forms the reverse side of the certainty about God possessed by this very human mind (thus skepticism should end precisely where it would become dangerous for God), so the Enlightenment, too, deploys its skepticism against the ultimate certainties of theology, in order to appeal in turn to empirical truths or to empiricism as truth when it comes to proving that beyond skepticism faith alone cannot possibly lie, and that skepticism is not "truly" healed by faith.

The same constellation confronts us in the fields of the conception of the world or nature and anthropology. Both apologetics and the normativist Enlightenment represent two-sided and ambiguous positions, which arise from the logically problematic but polemically indispensable flexible intertwining of a pessimistic and an optimistic aspect. (Why this could not be otherwise can be explained by the thesis that every worldview position that enters the scene with social claims to power must offer both a causality of suffering in Nietzsche's sense and open a perspective of redemption; in view of the former, the world and man must fundamentally be interpreted pessimistically, but for the sake of the latter, fundamentally optimistically.) Each party emphasizes the pessimistic aspect of its own position when the other asserts the optimistic one, and vice versa. In this game, which has confused some commentators, several combinations are possible; however, their discussion can only be undertaken on the basis of extensive textual analysis of the entire relevant literature. Here we can only outline or hermeneutically reconstruct the basic constellation. On the theological side, the ambiguity of the conception of the world or nature took the following form. On the one hand, it was asserted in a pessimistic tone that this world is not man's true home but only his provisional and inherently lowly dwelling place, where, however, one could earn the right to that true home through faith, penance, and good works—and indeed: if the world were not fundamentally a vale of tears, in which men had to pass through various trials, heaven would lose much of its attraction (and its earthly representatives would accordingly lose much of their power). On the other hand, however — especially within the framework of religiously colored Newtonianism or physico-theology

—[2183] the purposeful harmony and beauty of the world were praised as the work of a wise, good, and almighty God; evil was dismissed as merely apparent or attributed to human guilt, while the redemption and beatitude expected at the end of time were regarded as a necessary component or culmination of the flawless harmony of the world plan as conceived by God from the beginning. Now the normativist Enlighteners, too, had to assent to the "everything is good" if they understood nature (which they, however, upgraded compared to God) as a source of norms, or if they did not want to entrust the redemption — which was to be necessarily achieved and promised also by them — into the hands of a God who fit exactly into the concept of orthodoxy. And yet, there were also considerable polemical reasons standing in the way of carrying through this strategy consistently. Insofar as the thesis "everything is good" was bound to a theodicy based on the idea of the chain or the fullness of being, one had to accept the inevitability of evil, since every evil, as an appearance within being, represented a link in that chain, and thus its disappearance threatened to bring about the collapse of the whole chain.[2184] The Stoic or Spinozist reconciliation with fate was a logically defensible way out, but it could hardly meet higher polemical requirements — and such demands were being made with great urgency, because the "everything is good" just like the idea of progress[2185] could be and was interpreted in the sense of a philistine-conservative glorification of the existing order. A small dose of pessimism (but militant) in this question generally served the Enlightenment better, although the repudiation of the orthodox conception of the vale of tears had to remain unwaveringly firm.

The oscillation of apologetics between pessimism and optimism, and vice versa, can be observed at important moments during the Age of Enlightenment. Thus, ecclesiastical circles in France used Leibniz's

2183 See above, Chapter IV, Section 3a.

2184 Lovejoy, *Chain of Being*, Chapter VII.

2185 Schlöbach rightly pointed out that the catastrophic theory, in its polemical aspect, is directed against the "everything is good" in history, or against the justification of the existing as per definitionem progressive. However, the *Philosophes* managed to interpret the catastrophic theory optimistically, placing themselves in the ascending phase of the historical cycle: "La fonction idéologique de ces différentes utilisations de la théorie cyclique dépend du stade concret où les penseurs se situent dans le cycle" (*Pessimisme des philosophes?*, 1982, 1987).

theodicy against Bayle, only to distance themselves from it as soon as the possibility of its reinterpretation in the sense of the supposed deistic hubris of Pope's *Essay* began to emerge.[2186] The deistic coloring of optimism had disturbed many theologians from the outset, so that the extensive detachment from it after the literary crisis of 1755, which marked the end of Pope's heyday, did not come as much of a surprise.[2187] For apologetics, it was now necessary to explain the necessity and function of evil in a convincing way, rather than denying its existence. From the religiosity of this explanation, they hoped to prevent the agreement with some skeptics regarding the reality of evil from becoming dangerous.[2188] It was also remembered that the first broad-based open attack against theology had been undertaken with the skeptical-pessimistic weapons of Bayle, which also explains the temporary predominance of the optimistic tendency in theological circles.[2189] Bayle's persistent emphasis on the everyday triumphs of evil in the world aimed at the renewal of the Epicurean thesis that God must either not be omnipotent or must be malevolent,[2190] and the lasting effect of his argumentation is shown in the readiness with which prominent Enlighteners made God responsible for evil—[2191] although not from the perspective of disillusioned believers, but rather with the intention of forcing the theological opponent into the dilemma of either declaring God defective or excluding him from the course of the world. The price for this was at least a temporary identification with the theological view of the world as a vale of tears,

2186 Monod, *De Pascal à Chateaubriand*, 301f.; Barber, *Leibniz in France*, 164.

2187 Crocker, *Crisis*, 48ff.

2188 Hume depicted very vividly how dangerous it could become (*Dialogues on Natural Religion*, X–XI = *Philosophical Works*, II, 494ff., especially 519f.).

2189 The brief convergence of theology and deism during the period of optimism was commented on by Hazard: "nous sommes ici à un des rares moments de l'histoire des idées où un accord semble se faire avant que ses composantes ne se dénouent et ne reprennent leur liberté, en se combattant" (*Le problème du mal*, 157).

2190 *Réponse aux Questions*, LXXIVff. and CXLIVff. = *Oeuvres Diverses*, III, 650ff., 795ff.

2191 Diderot, *Pensées Philosophiques*, XV = OC, I, 131f.; d'Alembert, articles "Fortuit" and "Optimisme" in the *Encyclopédie*. Cf. Voltaire's still-optimistic rebuttal to Maupertuis, who also doubted the goodness of God (*Extrait de la bibliothèque raisonnée* = OC, XXIII, 537).

whereby nature as an ontological, independent source of norms and as a guarantor of redemption (if only one followed it) had to be set aside. Yet this did not seem too awkward, especially since the pure normativist concept of nature could no more completely explain the reality of evil than the immeasurable goodness of God could, while on the other hand the denial of that reality would have rendered every rebellion against the existing order meaningless and thus would have pulled the ground out from under the Enlightenment.

Against this background of intellectual history, in my view, the often-discussed "pessimistic turn" of Voltaire must also be understood. Voltaire himself names the reason why he could no longer (without essential reservations) uphold the belief in "tout est bien," which he had once entertained without hesitation during the honeymoon phase of Deism and optimism: he feared "les abus qu'on peut faire de cet ancien maxime," that is, its interpretation as a justification of existing conditions.[2192] His slow but steady distancing from that belief[2193] famously reaches a climax in the *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne.* Precisely in view of Voltaire's personal intellectual development in the preceding years—which moreover runs parallel to the general detachment of the Enlightenment from the optimistic Deism that coexisted more badly than well with (modernized) theology—[2194]it would be wrong to overvalue this text, interpreting it as the product of an emotional outburst that triggered a sudden intellectual reorientation. Passion is certainly very palpable, yet Voltaire remains sober enough—and had been intellectually prepared for some time—to channel it into the desired polemical direction. His pessimistic mood fundamentally arises from the unspoken realization that massive natural catastrophes must make extremely questionable the concept of a human-friendly rationality of nature inherent in the normativist concept of nature, while at the same time seeming to confirm the theological view that nature is ontologically inferior, and that man finds his true refuge not in it but in God. As a true polemicist, Voltaire now gives free rein to his bitterness about his own cause only in the form of an attack against the cause of the opponent. By cleverly

2192 *Poème sur le désastre*, Preface = OC, IX, 467f.

2193 See the good analysis by Morize in his introduction to *Candide*, especially XXIVff.

2194 See above, Chapter IV, Section 3a.

shifting the level of discussion, he does not ask what consequences the misanthropy or meaninglessness of nature might have for the fundamental concept of normativist Enlightenment, but instead holds God responsible,[2195] silently — and again without reflecting on the logical consequences —accepting the theological position of God's absolute dominion over nature, thus initially suppressing the fundamental modern idea of the autonomous lawfulness of nature. In order to hold God accountable, he must assume his omnipotence and freedom—but how sensible is it to call the Almighty to account? Would not pious submission to his will be more appropriate? Yet Voltaire gives the matter a different twist: following Bayle, he seeks to suggest that God's omnipotence is merely the reverse side of his wickedness.[2196] What man practically gains by realizing that he is a plaything in the hands of a malevolent God, Voltaire does not say — and the question does not genuinely interest him; for his sole aim is to render absurd the theological claims, still being voiced at the time, that the natural catastrophe was a punishment for sins, or that the "tout est bien" was not really disturbed by it.[2197] That all this was more a skillful counterattack at a very difficult moment for the normativist concept of nature is shown, moreover, by the fact that Voltaire did not behave after 1755 as if he had genuinely adopted or taken seriously the idea of a world subjected to the whims of a malevolent God. His pessimism is combative, and thus his worldview continues to contain certain optimistic basic elements that make the fight appear worthwhile—including the idea of a just God.[2198] The need to distinguish himself from atheistic materialism required this, while on

2195 "La nature est muette, on l'interroge en vain; On a besoin d'un Dieu, qui parle au genre humain," *Poème*, OC, IX, 475.

2196 Voltaire says this indirectly but clearly: the catastrophe is either due to human sin or because God is "sans pitié, tranquille, indifférent" (loc. cit.). The former he categorically excluded at the beginning of the poem (loc. cit., 470f.), so the reader can draw his own conclusions — despite the author's lip-service to divine providence at the end (loc. cit., 478). On Voltaire's dependence on Bayle regarding the idea of a malevolent God ("Dieu auteur du péché," *L'Ingénu*, X = OC, XXI, 274), see Mason, *Bayle and Voltaire*, 64f.

2197 Rohrer, *Das Erdbeben von Lissabon*, 27f., 49, 34ff.

2198 It is therefore inaccurate to speak undifferentiatedly of Voltaire's pessimism. Cf. the remarks by Pomeau, *Religion de Voltaire*, 241ff., 283ff., 307, and Wade, *Voltaire*, 688ff.

the other hand the distancing from "tout est bien" demanded an explanation for evil in the world; Voltaire—once again turning the theological position upside down, which held that evil was the (by-)product of human freedom—seeks to provide this explanation through the assumption of a strict determinism.[2199] "Tout est bien" now for him means only "que le tout est dirigé par des lois immuables".[2200] His combative pessimism is thus bought at the price of a logical contradiction, just as his earlier belief in "tout est bien," as he himself had to admit, stood in contradiction to his willingness to fight. Thus, in order to explain evil, Voltaire adopts determinism; but in order not to abandon the hope of redemption, or fall into the meaninglessness of materialism, he continues to hold onto God's justice—[2201]without considering, however, that without that freedom of human will, which his determinism abolishes, God's judgments could no longer be just or even comprehensible.

We said that in his rebellion against the malevolent God, Voltaire had to sacrifice the normativist concept of nature, or rather that his embarrassment about it, brought about by the natural catastrophe, erupted into that rebellion. What danger could arise from this for the fundamental concept of the Enlightenment was not lost, for example, on Rousseau. In his response to Voltaire's *Poème*, he defends nature by emphasizing its internal lawful harmony and by blaming not nature but its opposite, namely culture, for the catastrophe.[2202] Rousseau now connects the Christian concept of providence — of God's perfection and goodness — with the idea of nature as a harmonious whole. This alliance with Christianity, that is, the fusion of "tout est bien" as providence with "tout est bien" as nature, becomes inevitable in view of Voltaire's opposing position, for in his struggle against "tout est bien" as providence, Voltaire had let "tout est bien" as nature fall by the wayside, since he wanted to discover flaws in

2199 Voltaire's development toward determinism is described by Barber, *Leibniz in France*, 119ff. Diderot also, against Pope, resorted to determinism to explain evil: "Le mal existe; et il est une suite nécessaire des lois générales de la nature," *Introduction aux grands principes*, OC, II, 85

2200 *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, article "Bien (Tout est bien)" = OC, XVII, 584.

2201 The clearest formulation of this constellation of thought is found in the *Homélie sur l'Athéisme*, OC, XXVI, 319ff.

2202 *Lettre à Voltaire* = *Oeuvres*, IV, 1064ff., 1061.

providence through the blind outbursts of nature. Rousseau's answer to Voltaire's negative linking of God and nature had to be a positive linking; but it should not be overlooked that Rousseau does not regard theodicy as the most important or at least not the only goal—that his theodicy is, to a great extent—s*it venia verbo*—a "naturdicy," which in that concrete constellation had to become entangled with a theodicy. Rousseau, moreover, strives to keep his inevitable alliance with theology within clear limits, explicitly distancing himself in the same letter to Voltaire from positive religion;[2203] thus, his theodicy refers to natural religion and to God, instrumentalized in its sense. On another occasion, Rousseau had to defend himself vigorously against an interpretation of "tout est bien" in the sense of a practically paralyzing resignation toward human affairs—[2204]an aspect, however, that understandably is hardly brought up in the letter to Voltaire. The constant need for relativizing clarifications, tonal shifts, and distancing nevertheless shows clearly that logical difficulties were not spared even for Enlightenment optimism. If pessimism put the normativist concept of nature at risk, then optimism could not lead to a justification of the existing order. Equally problematic was that on neither of these two paths could even a partial overlap with theological positions be avoided—as long, of course, as atheism was not an option: if pessimism had to approach the vale-of-tears image, then optimism could not avoid occasionally praising divine providence. Depending on his situation and temperament, each Enlightener moved more in the direction of optimism or pessimism, inclined more to the one than the other, or eventually favored first the one and then the other; for both had their polemical advantages and disadvantages.

Even in the field of anthropology, the ambiguity of the Enlightenment position is conditioned not least by theology, in which man appears both as the image of God and at the same time as a wretched sinner. Against this, the Enlightenment must alternately deploy optimistic and pessimistic arguments, whereby the latter are not carried through to the bitter end, but are usually placed at the service of the struggle as much as possible. We have already discussed on what grounds the displacement of man from the center of the universe in the early modern period was not felt as a loss: the

2203 Loc. cit., 1072ff.

2204 *Lettre à Philopolis* = *Oeuvres*, III, 233f.

shattering of the old worldview was considered *eo ipso* a step toward liberation from the authorities who represented it.[2205] The Enlightenment completed what from the traditional point of view appeared as a metaphysical degradation of man by massively inserting him into the lawfulness of nature and, through the dissolution of the intellect within the framework of the radical rehabilitation of sensuality, by blurring or even erasing the boundaries between man and animal.[2206] The thesis of man's naturalness was thus the answer to the theological conception of man as the image of God. That he is not such is gladly accepted, since man ceases to be a metaphysical riddle and, through knowledge of the natural factors that constitute and drive him, becomes the object of scientific and educational efforts.[2207] The polemical power of the thesis of naturalness automatically made it a source of confidence, and therefore its deterministically pessimistic consequences did not induce permanent despair: by turning pessimism into a weapon, it is—at least psychologically—overcome. Moreover, it had to be curbed so as not to unintentionally lend support to the doctrine of original sin. Its elimination was a primary goal for the normativist Enlightenment, since the Church's claim to guardianship over people from birth was precisely based on it. In place of repentance and humility now stands moral consciousness, and the new or instrumentalized God, too, knows no sinners anymore, only people who have acted well or badly.[2208] As the main argument against the doctrine of original sin, however, it is not the reference to man's causally understood naturalness that is used, but rather the assumption of his original goodness or at least (more neutrally) his uncorrupted state.[2209] Causal and normative conceptions of man go hand in hand in the thought of most Enlighteners,[2210] and the reason why this initially does not cause disturbance lies in the polemical coherence of both concepts, which are directed simultaneously against

2205 See above, Chapter II, Sections 2b, 3a.

2206 See Section 3 of this chapter under a and c.

2207 In almost programmatic form, this thought process appears in Voltaire's refutation of Pascal, *Remarques sur les Pensées*, OC, XXII, especially 34, 40f., 42, 53f.

2208 Groethuysen, *Entstehung der bürgerlichen Weltanschauung*, I, 225f.

2209 Mercier, *Réhabilitation de la nature humaine*, passim.

2210 Cf. the remarks of Bredvold, *Brave New World*, 77ff.

the two different aspects of theological anthropology. The objectively existing discrepancy, however, leads to the fact that, with regard to an optimistic conception of man, the thesis of naturalness is at least partially reversed. Enlighteners, for example, who are otherwise willing to build a secular ethics on self-love and the feeling of pleasure, consider these very motives to be inferior or even contemptible when they are used by theological ethics to make the doctrines of punishment and reward in the afterlife psychologically convincing and effective.[2211] Thus, it seemed that theology degraded man not only through original sin but also through the offered redemption. Against this double degradation, the ideal image of man—the centerpiece of the normativist concept of nature — is opposed, whose radiance outshines the limits of human naturalness and thus allows them to be forgotten in self-confident pride.

However, the anthropological optimism deployed against the doctrine of original sin, just like the "tout est bien," could not be propagated in an unadulterated form. For just as the latter would have made the Enlightenment as rebellion superfluous, so the former seemed to render the Enlightenment as education unnecessary. Precisely in order to assert the necessity of education and thus also his own mission and elite vocation, the Enlightener must emphasize the previous rule of "unreason" or humanity's inclination toward it—at the price of clouding the ideal image of man he had sketched. The same double stance is also observable on the side of the opponent, since there too claims to authority are decisive. The ambivalence on both sides serves, on the one hand, to bring into general awareness the factors that stand in the way of redemption—thereby elevating the task of the educator (whether Enlightener or theologian) and legitimizing his direct or indirect claim to leadership—and, on the other hand, to ground the certainty, even the inevitability, of redemption and thus to save the meaning of life: for general meaninglessness also renders any claim to leadership meaningless. The hostility between the old and new worldviews and their representatives was thus irreconcilable because both fought for the same prize and therefore, despite all differences of content, employed the same formal structures of thought. Novalis had already grasped it at the time: "By instinct, the scholar is an enemy of the clergy according to the old constitution; the

2211 Crocker, *Crisis*, 400.

scholarly and the clerical estates must wage wars of extermination if they are separated; for they are fighting for the same place".[2212]

The social claim to leadership thus ultimately conditions the polemical aspect of the oscillation between optimism and pessimism, which is inseparably linked to the logical aspect of this oscillation (deterministic consequences of the rehabilitation of sensuality undertaken in expectation of a new freedom). A third aspect of this overall phenomenon must now be pointed out, namely, the concrete existential and social situation of the Enlighteners, which could not have been less contradictory. At a late point, Condorcet gave an assessment of the prevailing conditions that, in its two-sidedness and generality, would have been endorsed even by the Enlighteners of the two preceding generations: "Dans quelques points, nos yeux sont frappés d'une lumière éclatante; mais d'épaisses ténèbres couvrent encore un immense horizon. L'âme du philosophe se repose avec consolation sur un petit nombre d'objets; mais le spectacle de la stupidité, de l'esclavage, de l'extravagance, de la barbarie, l'afflige plus souvent encore".[2213] In fact, there was no lack of good signs, not only in the life of states (English "freedom," efforts of enlightened monarchs on the continent), but also concerning the social position of the new intelligentsia, both the independent (spread of journalism) and the

2212 *Christenheit oder Europa* = *Schriften*, III, 515. — In the matter of the relationship between Enlightenment and theology, just as in the question of secularization (see Chapter II, note 10), an accurate understanding is impossible without the distinction proposed here between content of thought and structure of thought. Becker, who rightly pointed out the a priori-deductive tendencies of Enlightenment thinking and its dependence on certain articles of faith, correctly recognized an important similarity with theological-scholastic thinking; however, he then made the unnecessary — or misleading — effort to discover as many substantive parallels between Enlightenment and theology as possible, to demonstrate their full congruence. In his reply to Becker, Gay made the opposite mistake: he listed the major substantive differences between Enlightenment and theology, concluding that Becker's claimed similarities did not exist (*Becker's Heavenly City*, especially 185ff.). Emerson, in his defense of Becker against Gay (*Gay and the Heavenly City*, 390ff.), reproduced Becker's conceptual confusion, tracking similarities of content rather than recognizing the fundamentally new status of old concepts and their instrumentalization in the face of the threat of nihilism (cf. Section 2 of this chapter).

2213 *Esquisse*, IX^{e} époque = *Oeuvres*, VI, 232.

state-dependent (new opportunities for advancement in the newly founded or reorganized universities and research institutes).[2214] All this was naturally a reason for optimism, yet at the same time the Enlightenment groups felt like small scattered islands amid the black sea of ignorance and superstition. Although the Church had lost the monopoly on education as well as a (at least among educated laymen considerable) part of its influence,[2215] its power was still unbroken in important areas; the upper clergy could influence major socio-political decisions, while the lower clergy had more or less firm control over the daily lives of the overwhelming majority of people from cradle to grave. Only a fraction of the population could read—and even fewer people could or wanted to think in Enlightenment categories.[2216] Popular culture had not yet entered the modern era, that is, it was still based on a fabulous worldview in which fairies, giants, saints, and humans mingled freely.[2217] Church and Enlightenment, each with an eye toward expanding their own ideological influence, worked together against magic and popular superstition; yet even though astrology, for example, encountered increasing reserve among educated circles over the century, or though there were attempts at physical explanations of "magical phenomena," occultist and theosophical currents simultaneously grew stronger, reaching their peak immediately before 1789.[2218] Upper and lower classes alike, according to all available evidence, participated in "superstition," albeit in different ways. And while some Illuminati or Freemasons tried to build bridges between their own "superstition" and

2214 McClelland, *German Universities* and Emerson, *Scottish Universities*, passim.

2215 On the eve of the Revolution, the French clergy had fewer members than during the time of Louis XIV — despite population growth, Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers*, 13.

2216 Even shortly before 1789, the reading public in the French provinces mainly consumed religious-theological books, often ones that had appeared decades earlier and had become "classics"; most schoolbooks also remained religious in content (Brancolini-Bouyssy, *La vie provinciale du livre*, 11ff., 18). It was similar in other European countries.

2217 Mandrou, *De la culture populaire*, 162f.; cf. Bollème, *Littérature populaire*, 76ff.

2218 Wilkins, *Some Aspects of the Irrational*, 109, 121f., 125f., 158ff., 198f.; Bila, *La croyance à la magie*, 12ff.; Faivre, *L'ésotérisme*, 31ff.

Enlightenment progressiveness,[2219] theosophical movements that had emerged in the wake of Jansenism and mystical Quietism developed militant anti-Enlightenment activities.[2220] These brief notes on widespread phenomena should again make clear how necessary it is to distinguish fundamentally between the Enlightenment and its age.[2221]

If the Enlightenment nevertheless gained ground, it was not simply because of its quantitative spread, but above all because the importance of the elite supporting it gradually grew within the balance of social forces, or because it managed to penetrate into the ruling elites, themselves in the process of dissolution. Yet this was a slow process, which only retrospectively appears irresistible; from the contemporary perspective, the outcome was uncertain, and the power of the existing order was still great enough to cause the mood of the Enlighteners to oscillate between (programmatic) optimism and (environmentally induced) pessimism. For the gradually opening free spaces stood under the sword of Damocles of censorship and persecution—[2222]and even within them, one could not move entirely unhindered. Although the social standing of the man of letters in general was rising, birth and wealth still remained decisive; and although the relations between authors and publishers undoubtedly changed in favor of the former compared to the 17th century, they were still far from satisfactory for the great mass of writers.[2223] The (impecunious) writer, unless he had unusual luck, had to purchase his independence with privations and uncertainty about the future. In

2219 Faivre, *L'ésotérisme*, 59ff.

2220 Wais, *Das antiphilosophische Weltbild*, 2, 19, 37ff. Wais rightly observed that the struggle against intellectualism could stem either from the "subrational" side (e.g., Helvétius and the materialists) or from the "suprarational" side, meaning that an identical practical effect could arise from diametrically opposed ideological currents. His mistake lay in believing that this double anti-intellectualism was purely a reaction against a previous intellectualist phase of the Enlightenment.

2221 See above, Chapter I, Section 2.

2222 Pellisson, *Hommes de Lettres*, 1st chapter. The clandestine guerilla warfare of the early French Enlightenment against crushing legality has been vividly depicted by Wade, *The Clandestine Organization etc.*, passim. The psychological consequences of Enlighteners' occasional tensions between legality and illegality can be easily imagined.

2223 Pellisson, *Hommes de Lettres*, 244ff., 83ff.; Darnton, *Literary Low-Life*, 93ff.

Voltaire's vivid formulation: "L'homme de lettres est sans secours; il ressemble aux poissons volants: s'il s'élève un peu, les oiseaux le dévorent; s'il plonge, les poissons le mangent".[2224] Here Voltaire was thinking not only of material hardship, but also of the various forms of open and covert persecution in a society where the party of reason was not strong enough to fully guarantee the social protection of its members. Under these circumstances, the willingness grew, at least outwardly, to make arrangements with the existing order—even among those who had no material worries but feared social isolation and ostracism; the struggles at the deathbeds of Montesquieu[2225] and Voltaire[2226] speak volumes about the psychological and social aspects of the situation described here. Yet arrangement was not *eo ipso* capitulation; it served, in one way or another, the continuation of the work. But now, since one had to move simultaneously on two levels, tactical maneuvers and casuistry outwardly, and rationalization mechanisms inwardly, became indispensable. In the field of tension between rebellion and adaptation, there emerged that ambivalent psychological attitude between fear and aggressiveness, pride and (feigned) humility, confidence and resignation, which can be reconstructed, for instance, from Diderot's remarks. He declares himself ready to give his life for the truth, yet he refuses a dangerous manuscript on the grounds that he has a wife and child;[2227] he expresses his determination to complete the *Encyclopédie* despite all difficulties, and in the same breath voices the wish to withdraw and privatize himself, since men are not capable of enlightenment;[2228] his soul, as he writes, is full of fear of possible persecution, and yet he does not flee, as an inner voice advises, but stays and works on, partly out of habit, partly out of hope that the very next day everything might look completely different.[2229]

2224 *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, article "Lettres, Gens de Lettres ou Lettré" = OC, XIX, 577.
2225 Shaddeton, *Montesquieu*, 394ff.
2226 Pomeau, *Religion de Voltaire*, 444ff.
2227 Letter to Landois, June 29, 1752 = OC, XIX, 433.
2228 Letter to Voltaire, February 19, 1758 = OC, XIX, 451f.
2229 Letter to Voltaire, October 8 or 10, 1766 = *Correspondance*, VI, 334ff. D'Alembert's similar psychological fluctuations are finely depicted by Grimsley, *D'Alembert*, 118ff.

Generalizations would, of course, be out of place. Not everyone felt the way Diderot did, for not everyone stood in the front ranks as stubbornly as he did—and even fewer could so sharply and so openly examine their own psyche. The smaller stars of the Enlightenment movement—not to mention the mere fellow travelers—also had smaller problems to overcome, and since their inner tensions were accordingly lower, similar processes played out within them far less dramatically. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of their situation was objectively given, and each had to come to terms with it in some way—depending on temperament and immediate environment. Yet, as we must repeat regarding the quoted remarks of Diderot and the entire literary production of the Enlightenment, social adaptation and caution—however fluid their boundaries with cowardice or opportunism might have been for some Enlighteners—were generally not betrayals of principle, and that counts. For the Enlightener feels himself above all as the exponent of a great principle—more: he identifies himself (or at least his ideal self) with it and vice versa, so that he can directly relate his words and actions to it or derive them from it. Almost unlimited possibilities for rationalization are thus available to him, which is advantageous both subjectively and objectively: subjectively, because adaptation, "correctly interpreted," can appear as service to the principle and thus not as a practically paralyzing burden of conscience; and objectively, because the Enlightener only puts himself in a position to influence his environment through adaptation (an important example of influence through adaptation is precisely the instrumentalization of theological concepts in the Enlightenment sense). Whether, however, the subjective need for adaptation arises exclusively and always only with regard to the objective necessity of adaptation for the sake of influence, may at least in some cases be doubted, and is, moreover, irrelevant for our analysis, which merely seeks to describe a situation and not to pass moralistic judgment.[2230] What must be noted is the double function of

2230 In this differentiated perspective, the debate over the question of the social integration of the Enlighteners and its effects on Enlightenment principles becomes almost irrelevant (cf. Walters' remarks, *Sur l'Intelligentsia des Lumières*, 190, against Darnton's integration thesis; Darnton, however, emphasized that the social integration of Enlighteners went along with a certain opening of the existing order to Enlightenment ideas, *Literary Low-Life*,

the principle, which can dictate or rationalize both rebellion and adaptation as legitimation, so that even the latter, under the given circumstances, can serve the spread of the principle—if only because it makes the principle appear harmless to the existing order. No adaptation, however, could permanently render harmless a principle that was defined in direct opposition to that of the opponent, or whose polemical edge on the theoretical level—even if not always in the daily behavior of its representatives—was unmistakable. For reason stood directly opposite grace, and the Enlightener was supposed to represent the former, as Diderot, for example, made clear,[2231] precisely in its specific difference from the latter. The demand for the autonomy of reason remains indispensable,[2232] no matter how much it itself may rest on articles of faith: the (unconscious) similarity of the structure of thought does not in the least soften the (conscious) substantive opposition between the two principles.

If the representation of the principle of reason brings the Enlightener into a tense relationship with the powers of darkness and thus into various difficulties, it also offers enticing compensations. Not only because that principle fulfills a complex rationalization function, but also because its advocacy theoretically supports an elitist consciousness, capable of consoling the Enlightener over any temporary or permanent discomfort by transforming fear of it into pride in it. Still more: the elitist consciousness can—since it does not appear in the eyes of the person concerned as a prosaic, morally questionable claim to leadership, but rather as a self-respecting conviction of the rightness of his cause—mobilize forces and spur practical activity. Since the Enlightener, in his programmatic demarcation from Christian acosmism, is supposed to be worldly and socially oriented,[2233] he must not expend his elitist self-feeling in looking down on this stupid and dirty world, but must combine it with

91f.). One should, however, free oneself from the sociologically naive notion that ideas only have an effect when their representatives are entirely moral and uncompromising; very often, the opposite is true.

2231 *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, article "Philosophe" = OC, XVI, 274.

2232 Even if agreement with revelation is not categorically excluded, reason is still meant to decide whether such agreement actually exists. Locke's statements on this have already been cited above, Chapter V, Section 3b.

2233 Diderot, article "Philosophe" = OC, XVI, 276f.

an intense participation in its fates. Elitism, under this condition, consists in the belief that one belongs to a minority which, in possession of the principle of reason, alone is called to educate the currently unreasonable but potentially reasonable men (thus linking the claim to leadership and the two-sided anthropology!). Elitist consciousness and journalistic—indeed, popularizing—activity thus form the two inseparable aspects of a single attitude—that of the (to varying degrees) militant Enlightener. The logically and sociologically conditioned pessimism is compensated for — or aggressively overcome — by the Enlightener placing his intellectual work at the service of a purpose, or rather by not even distinguishing between the two. It is not a matter of originality in the sense of discovering "dead knowledge," but of employing the weapon of criticism, whose principles are already established wherever they are currently needed.[2234] As Condorcet said: "Philosophes" are "une classe d'hommes moins occupés encore de découvrir ou d'approfondir la vérité que de la répandre".[2235] One consequence of this attitude is the strong popularization of philosophy, thereby increasing its propagandistic value; in this sense, Diderot's call must be understood: "Hâtons-nous de rendre la philosophie populaire".[2236] By "popular philosophy" both the contentual and formal opposition to scholastic philosophy is meant, as expressed in the turning away from syllogistic procedure and from Latin.[2237] When we look at the overall picture, the at least relative simplicity and directness of the language used is striking. Philosophy is generally no longer understood as a specialized occupation, but as the observation and critique of things from the perspective of reason—[2238]an expansion of the philosophical that clarifies the ideological claim of the "philosophes." Now literature, journalism, or even dietetics can be called philosophical, and a philosopher is therefore anyone who formulates general reflections on

2234 Cf. the excellent remarks of Gusdorf, *Principes de pensée*, 490ff.

2235 *Esquisse*, IX^{e} époque = *Oeuvres*, VI, 187.

2236 *Interprétation de la Nature*, XL = OC, II, 38.

2237 Schalk, *Formen und Disharmonien*, 255f.

2238 According to a precise formulation by Kortum (*Zur Grundbedeutung des Philosophiebegriffes*, 170): "not a discipline of knowledge or theory of knowledge, but a basic attitude permeating all areas of life, oriented toward practical-social verification."

man and nature. Piquant incidents, of course, did not fail to occur, which explains Goethe's somewhat ironic depiction of the philosophical fashion.[2239] Nevertheless, through the popularization of philosophy as general knowledge, the long-desired connection of theory and practice seems to have been achieved, especially since for the Enlighteners knowledge (and science) is the motor of social development. Another aspect of the new connection between theory and practice is also significant for intellectual history and sociology. As the content of the *Encyclopédie* shows, the Enlighteners are no longer satisfied with the marriage of *sciences* and *belles lettres*; the complete "esprit philosophique" is based on the synthesis of those two with the "arts et métiers".[2240]

Despite all popularization and vulgarization, the new philosophy had to remain more or less distant from the broad masses, who were still held in check by "superstition." However, the elitist consciousness of the Enlightener protects itself from present disappointments through the thought of posterity, from which the recognition and praise that must be denied in their own lifetime are expected.[2241] What is the only consolation for the persecuted and unrecognized philosophers? Diderot asks: "c'est que le préjugé passerait et que la postérité reverserait l'ignominie sur leurs ennemis. Ô postérité sainte et sacrée... La postérité pour le philosophe, c'est l'autre monde de l'homme religieux".[2242] The vision of a happy and grateful posterity does not, however, distract from the present; the future is precisely presented as the reversal of the present, and thus an intimate connection exists between the intensity of the present struggle and the strength of the vision. It therefore remains a question of finding the best way to meaningfully utilize Enlightenment potential *hic et nunc*. Since the "philosophes," as d'Alembert once ironically remarked, had at least this in common with princes—that they could

2239 *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, II, 7 = SW, 23, 71.

2240 Schalk, *Einleitung in die Encyclopédie*, 105, 108. See also Proust, *Diderot et l'Encyclopédie*, 163ff., especially 196ff., and Gille, *L'Encyclopédie dictionnaire technique*, passim.

2241 Becker, *Gottesstaat und irdisches Reich*, 94ff.

2242 Letter to Falconet, February 1766 = OC, XVIII, 100f.

not endure the slightest insult—[2243]personal and ideological quarrels within their ranks constantly threatened the union against the common enemy that was generally recognized as necessary.[2244] The one great line was lacking in the Enlightenment movement, yet the sense of the existence of such a movement with solid bearers becomes visible in the (vain) efforts to set forth this one line in a clear and binding way. The general commitment to the principle of reason, given its ambiguity, had to be supplemented by concrete rules of practical behavior. Such rules were, for example, what d'Alembert attempted to establish, placing first the criticism of the tendency of fame-hungry writers to seek the protection of the powerful. Since the powerful were not educated enough to recognize true intellectual value or true talent, their protection often benefited the unworthy, thereby confusing intellectual life; only humiliation and disorientation could be expected from such protection.[2245] D'Alembert preferred poverty, especially being convinced that not birth or wealth, but only talent constituted the true worth of a man and the only decisive distinction between men.[2246] His envisioned practical ideal and tactical course of action was the strengthening of the independence of the writers, so that they could have full and direct effect. In confining this influence to the realm of the spirit, d'Alembert indirectly admitted the political impotence of the man of letters. His proposals reflect an early phase of the Enlightenment movement, in which the writer felt strong enough to assert his (intellectual) superiority and to target independence as a realistic perspective, but did not yet dare to engage in open political struggle. This would soon change, not least through Voltaire's public interventions on behalf of victims of injustice and intolerance. In an even later phase, associated with the names of Turgot and Malesherbes, Enlighteners even assumed government responsibility. Yet it remains characteristic that they did not wish to relinquish their independence even then; they understood themselves not as representatives of a government before its subjects, but rather as the voice of the nation — or of reason — within the government itself.[2247]

2243 *Essai sur la société de gens de lettres* = *Oeuvres*, III, 45.

2244 Pellisson, *Hommes de Lettres*, 195ff.

2245 *Essai sur la société de gens de lettres* = *Oeuvres*, III, 39, 64ff.

2246 *loc. cit.*, 93, 63 ff.

2247 See the excellent presentation by Stricklen, *The Philosophe's Political*

Regardless of whether they engage politically in the narrower sense or prefer to reserve for themselves the status of a higher intellectual authority: the Enlighteners fundamentally always think polemically, always with regard to the concrete situation in which they live and act. Their lines of thought develop in relation to something that must be proven or rejected, where argumentative victory is felt, not least, as the strengthening of their own position of power. This already shows itself, as we know, in the substantive definition of reason and rationality—and just as much in the internal logic of other Enlightenment postulates, which, taken at their nominal value, seem to have only a general-human, not a polemical content. This is the case, for example, with the famous demand for tolerance. Like the entire constellation of thought in which it emerged, it had a concrete polemical meaning: it was initially directed against the dominance of established Christianity, and its realization would, at that historical moment, by itself have strengthened the position of its advocates within the intellectual and social spectrum. That demands are made in the name of humanity should not obscure their partisanship but should rather be seen as an absolute intensification of it. The demand for tolerance is no exception, although it might seem that it ought to benefit all sides and therefore be acceptable to all. But, as is well known, this is not the case in practice, and this cannot be accidental; it can only be explained with regard to its respective polemical meaning. The Enlighteners always made the formulation of the demand for tolerance dependent on concrete, polemically conceived conditions. On the one hand, most of them did not want to extend tolerance to atheists or nihilists, since these compromised or weakened the Enlightenment party. In 1769, Voltaire wrote that tolerance should not be understood as "la licence des opinions contraires aux moeurs".[2248] Diderot too once expressed quite sharply the thought that whoever was unwilling to think in terms of rational natural law forfeited his status as a human being and should therefore be treated "comme un être dénaturé," that is, be eliminated without hesitation.[2249] On the other hand, of course, there could be no tolerance for the enemies of tolerance (which concretely means: for the enemies of the advocates of the demand for

Mission, especially 150ff., 158ff., 205.

2248 *Guebres*, *Discours historique etc.* = OC, VI, 502; my emphasis.

2249 Article "Droit Naturel" in the *Encyclopédie* = OC, XIV, 301.

tolerance). "Quiconque ose dire, Hors de l'Église point de salut, doit être chassé de l'état," writes Rousseau.[2250] The position of the Enlighteners on this question is expressed with great clarity in d'Alembert's essay *Sur la Destruction des Jésuites en France*. The expulsion of the Jesuits from France is not discussed here under the aspect of whether everyone without exception has the right to publicly express their opinion and act accordingly within the framework of the law (an argument the Enlighteners used when defending their own freedom of expression); instead, it is asked whether the opinions of the Jesuits are good and useful or not, and it is taken for granted who has the authority to decide this. D'Alembert shows little concern for the legal irregularities of the process against the Jesuits: if the persecution itself is right and its reasons (as he himself says) lie deeper than the legal aspects, then this or that formality is insignificant.[2251] Characteristically, the essay concludes in an almost inquisitorial manner: binding "formules de déclaration" are drawn up or proposed, which the former Jesuits were to sign.[2252] The purely polemical treatment of the problem by d'Alembert is also evident when he reproaches the Jesuits for their tyrannomachic doctrines, thereby trying to profile the Enlighteners as defenders of law and order (a truly Jesuitical maneuver!); and above all when he goes so far as to defend the Jansenist doctrine of predestination against the Jesuit thesis of free will, claiming that the latter was merely a propagandistic maneuver.[2253] D'Alembert's defense of the Jansenists actually rests not on principled but purely tactical considerations.[2254] Yet, fearing too great a gain in power by the Jansenists—which would have meant that the expulsion of the Jesuits would not benefit "reason" but again "obscurantism"—he pleads for the general cessation of theological

2250 *Contrat social*, IV, 8 = *Oeuvres*, III, 469.
2251 *Oeuvres*, V, 93ff.
2252 loc. cit., 145ff.
2253 loc. cit., 44ff.
2254 A purely principled consideration of the question would actually have led d'Alembert to defend the Jesuits, who had not only adopted humanist ideas but also significantly expanded the rights of nature against grace (Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers*, 33ff., 51f.) and had advocated a conception of God much closer to the deistic-Enlightenment conception than that of the Jansenists (Groethuysen, *Entstehung der bürgerlichen Weltanschauung*, I, 140ff.).

debates.[2255] These details make it clear that the Enlighteners, even when appealing to general moral principles, always act as representatives of a particular party and consider the respective constellation of forces and the relation to friend and foe solely in the interest of that party. They think concretely and politically, even when it comes to demands like tolerance. For them too, therefore, the principle applies: the enemy of my enemy is my friend.[2256]

2255 *Sur la Destruction des Jésuites en France*, *Oeuvres*, V, 133ff.

2256 Even collaboration with censorship was not excluded when it came to eliminating an inconvenient opponent; see Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers*, 6f. — The usefulness of the Jansenists for Enlightenment goals was openly admitted by d'Alembert in a letter to Voltaire, May 4, 1762 = *Oeuvres*, XV, 202: "Ils croient servir la religion, mais ils servent la raison sans s'en douter; ce sont les exécuteurs de la haute justice pour la philosophie, dont ils prennent les ordres sans le savoir."

CHAPTER SEVEN
Forms of Nihilism in the Enlightenment

1. Essential Definition of Nihilism

Nihilism could be defined, with regard to the intellectual spectrum of the Enlightenment, as the attempt to carry out the rehabilitation of sensibility completely and without value judgments, wherein nature is understood solely as raw or refined matter (the latter producing "spirit") and at the same time devoid of all values (but also of all disvalues). Nihilism thus both shares and simultaneously drives to the extreme the Enlightenment's rehabilitation of sensibility (in this respect, it is inseparable from the Enlightenment as a whole), while on the other hand it rejects the entanglement of nature and norm (thus opposing the most influential tendency within the Enlightenment)—not in order to continue cultivating norms apart from or beyond nature, but to eradicate them entirely, regarding them as merely human, mutable conventions, subjective fictions without objective validity. In fact, after the elimination of spirit on the one hand and the separation of nature and norm on the other, there remains no room for objectively valid norms: for until then, such norms had been grounded either in spirit, in its divine and human dimension, or in the normative aspect of nature. The nihilistic universe is (due to the elimination of spirit) monistically materialistic and at the same time (due to the elimination of the normative aspect of nature) causally conceived. Monism and determinism, combined in pure form, produce a closed system that sweeps away all the logical difficulties of the necessarily dualistic normative Enlightenment in a single stroke. In other words: the permanent conflict between the causal and the normative, between sensibility and spirit, is ended by the abolition of the normative and of spirit (logically). Nihilism can thus enjoy the logical coherence that normative Enlightenment could not attain. The normative

Enlightenment had only one theoretical possibility available to escape the dualism of oscillation: the unification of being under optimistic auspices, as envisioned by Shaftesbury or (occasionally and less systematically) Rousseau.[2257] Thus, even purely formally and structurally considered, the nihilistic worldview stands closest to that orientation from which it is in content diametrically opposed: for the opposition lies in the worldview's content, whereas the structural monism on both sides aims to absolutize the decision indicated in their respective contents. Thus, precisely from the absoluteness of their content opposition arises a structural kinship, which can be particularly clearly illustrated through the anthropological problem. In both conceptions, nature is to permeate man entirely, so that his actions, if only they can unfold without the influence of heterogeneous factors, must obey the commands of nature, indeed must express the essence of nature. Since man is wholly nature, he also executes the commands of nature with the full force of his unified existence; the dualistic anthropology is abolished, which simultaneously entails either the elimination or at least the substantial downgrading of intellect.[2258] We saw,[2259] for example, that with Hutcheson, the intellect has primarily technical tasks to accomplish, or is to find the most expedient way to realize what the voice of nature commands—and it has the same status with Sade.[2260] Now, however, the voice of nature issues very different commands depending on how its essence has been defined. From the perspective of the normative conception of nature, the unhindered unfolding of the powers of natural man must eo ipso bring about the realization of those norms that are supposed to spring from the essence of nature per definitionem. Conversely, if every normative aspect is stripped from nature, then the unrestrained activity of natural man could yield exactly what, for the normativist, constitutes crime, but for the one acting beyond good and evil can be the deepest existential satisfaction. Both sides therefore want to let

2257 On Rousseau's ontological theodicy see Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 119 ff.

2258 "Si eile [Ia Nature) nous a destines a ~tre sains, j'ose presque assurer, que l'etat de rHlexion est un etat contre Nature, et que l'homme qui medite est un animal deprave," Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine etc.*, I = *Œuvres*, III, 138.

2259 See above, Chapter VI, Section 3 b.

2260 See Section 3 of this chapter.

nature run free, but they connect entirely different expectations to it.

The theoretical superiority of the nihilistic standpoint becomes apparent in that pure optimistic normativism cannot immediately put its ideal of noninterference with the course of nature into practice. We have already pointed out its Achilles' heel, which also prevented it from becoming the main current of Enlightenment normativism:[2261] it is actually incapable of providing an explanation for evil in the world, and if it tries merely to bypass this, it loses its persuasive force and practical relevance. Thus, it also fails to maintain logical coherence throughout. It introduces the shimmering distinction between the "true being" and the "false appearance" of nature in order to assign evil to the latter and thus explain it away, while at the same time it must partially revoke its principle of noninterference with the natural course insofar as this seems necessary to combat the "appearance" and to restore the "true being" of nature; the smuggling in of intellectual control instances cannot be avoided. Nihilistic reflection, on the other hand, does not require such auxiliary constructions. For the effect of what the normativist considers evil can be empirically observed, and since there is no interest in the triumph of the "good," the distinction between being and appearance also becomes unnecessary. Nihilism remains phenomenally oriented; appearance (i.e., what normative metaphysics designates as such) constitutes its only being. Therefore, it also does not need to explain the good, because good and evil exist only for normativism, not for it. Nihilists thus restrict themselves to a psychological and sociological genealogy of morality, in which their theoretical superiority over pure normativism is once again revealed. For it is by far more difficult to understand how evil can arise from the originally and purely ontologically good, than to describe genetically how, for example, self-love within the framework of social life through institutions and so forth transforms into morality, or how the internalization of norms produces conscience and thereby the impression of the autonomy or originality of morality. Not only logically but also psychologically must the consistent nihilist feel unburdened. Worldview pessimism and optimism are alien to him, since he has left good and evil behind: for these presuppose them, with optimism feeding on the hope for the triumph of the good, pessimism

2261 See above, Chapter VI, Section 1.

on the fear of the triumph of evil.

We said that an important logical precondition of nihilism was the withdrawal of all normative components from the concept of nature. Mechanistic natural science had already taken this step, but alongside the machine of nature still stood spirit or God, so that norms ran no (direct) danger.[2262] The anti-Cartesianism of the Enlightenment had, in turn, supplemented the interweaving of nature and God within the new idea of the Whole by a substantial strengthening of the normative aspect of nature,[2263] so that the downgrading of the traditional embodiment of all values could be theoretically compensated. The shared, though content-wise very different, normative function of God and nature explains why nihilism had not only to reject the normative concept of nature but also to be atheistic. The disputes over God and nature regarding the content of norms hardly interest it; for nihilism, nature remains a mere transformation of God as long as it retains its normative aspect. The complete disenchantment of nature thus appears as the consistent continuation of what had begun with the downgrading of God. Indeed, already in the seventeenth century, the moral colorlessness of nature or the universe is most strongly emphasized by authors who cared little for a (personal) God: Spinoza and Hobbes—who, tellingly, also foreground the self-preservation motive central to the nihilists. At the threshold of the Enlightenment, Bayle discredited the emerging specifically Enlightenment-oriented normative concept of nature by denying the goodness of all natural gifts or the naturalness of all good, with the laconic statement: "La Nature est un etat de maladie," its taming requiring divine and human laws.[2264] But also efforts such as those of Locke, which consciously or unconsciously, willingly or not, more or less followed Hobbes and presented morality as a product of positing, convention, or utilitarian calculation, objectively contributed to the weakening of the pure normative concept of nature. Mandeville can already be assigned to the nihilists in this respect, although in him the ontological preconditions of nihilism (atheistic materialism) are

2262 Why mechanistic natural science was logically incompatible with the atheistic materialism of the Enlightenment was explained above, Chapter IV, Section 4, cf. 3 b.

2263 See above, Chapter IV, Section 3 a and Chapter V, Section 4.

2264 *Réponse aux questions d'un Provincial*, CV = *Œuvres Div.*, III, 714.

lacking, and besides, his early liberal optimistic idea of harmony is still too strong for him to represent Enlightenment nihilism in an ideal-typical way. Even if we set aside the materially founded approaches from the natural sciences, there were thus enough intellectual motives that could be developed further in a nihilistic direction—if only they were equipped with the corresponding signs. These made it clear, however, that nihilism also rested on a worldview decision, and therefore one must not assume that the Enlightenment necessarily led to it as if it were a linear progression toward a fixed goal. On the other hand, a rationalized decision in favor of nihilism could only logically come into question once the said intellectual motives had gained ground. It is no accident and no interpretable flaw that modern nihilism was formulated fully and consistently for the first time precisely in the Enlightenment era.[2265] The nihilists bring to light the

2265 It is Crocker's great merit to have grasped nihilism as an organic component or logical possibility of the Enlightenment. Crocker hits the nail on the head when he speaks of the wavering of normative Enlightenment "between the Scylla of supernaturalism and the Charybdis of nihilism" (*Nature and Culture*, 512). His philologically very skillful and knowledgeable treatment of the nihilism problem is, however, at least logically and historically one-sided. He fundamentally identifies nihilism with anarchic lust for destruction and views it—quite trivially—as a harbinger of National Socialism, etc. (*Nature and Culture*, 335, 58, 396). We have already noted (Chapter II, n. 9) that nihilism should rather be defined as the thesis of the relativity and fictitiousness of all values; if the objective validity of the "ought" falls away, destruction can follow—but it need not, if a consistent nihilist refuses to make a new "ought" out of destruction. That there is no necessary logical connection between nihilism and destruction is evident from the simple, historically indisputable fact that the greatest suffering in history arose not from the destruction-lust of nihilists, but from struggles to enforce the respective "only true" morals or religions. Concentration camps were erected in the name of class or race—in the name of certain values, not by invoking the bitter relativity of all human things. Crocker, as a liberal humanist, may claim that these were not the "true" values, but that would merely assert his own value judgments. That in struggles over values every party brands its opponent as a nihilist or destroyer of the foundations of "human dignity" is merely evidence of the polemical use of such terms and not a scientific statement (cf. above, Chapter II, Section 1). Crocker proceeds similarly in relation to Enlightenment nihilism. Even more: faced with the anchoring of nihilism in important thought-motifs of the Enlightenment—which he himself rightly notes—he speaks of the "failure" of

final logical consequences of the thorough rehabilitation of sensibility. For this, however, they are not admired but ostracized. For it is not about logical but about polemical consequence and effectiveness, and whoever morally compromises the rising worldview must be isolated and fought. Every nihilism paralyzes the striking force of a worldview because within culture the instinct for self-preservation is intertwined with the thesis of the meaning of life.[2266]

the Enlightenment as a whole and of the "failure" of the Revolution of 1789, which supposedly revealed the weakness of Enlightenment ideas (*Age of Crisis*, 376, 448).

We do not want to investigate here in what sense revolutions can be "successful" or whether they must necessarily be morally beneficial phenomena simply because they are made in the name of ideals. But when Crocker speaks of the logical failure of the Enlightenment, he evidently assumes that moral and worldview problems can generally be solved—which is by no means self-evident. The features of the Enlightenment crisis, as Crocker—so beautifully—depicts them, are often so general that one could think he is describing the dark labyrinth of the *condition humaine* itself (*Age of Crisis*, 473). In that case, however, it would be unreasonable to reproach a specific epoch for not having mastered problems that no earlier or later epoch has been able to grasp logically or socially—at least not in the sense that the proposed solutions were accepted as slogans by all and interpreted identically by all.

Crocker seems to believe (especially when he speaks of special "ethical difficulties of secularism") that the theological worldview was logically more coherent and thus could guarantee a somewhat homogeneous, even if not in the liberal sense free, social life. Neither of these was actually the case. We have indicated several times that the logical ambivalence of theology (apart from its internal tornness) was no less than that of the Enlightenment—and that logical ambivalence, in both cases, was not accidental or a product of insufficient reflection, but served polemical-ideological functions, namely to legitimize claims to power. The Enlightenment secularized not only theological thought structures, but—inevitably—also their embedded ambiguities (wavering between being and appearance, between optimistic and pessimistic anthropology, etc., see above Chapter V, Section 4 and Chapter VI, Section 5).

As for the social effects of the Christian-theological worldview, Crocker's special dislike of contemporary concentration camps should not make him forget the religious wars, the witch hunts, or the Christianization of the Saxons. To be consistent, Crocker—following his own connection between nihilism and totalitarianism—should ask about the relationships between crimes of the

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At least regarding the elimination of the normative aspect of nature, Hume would have to be counted among the nihilists, especially since in our analysis this term means the thesis of the relativity of all values and not necessarily a lust for destruction or a cult of evil: objectively good and evil do not exist from the perspective of that thesis. Hume drew an exceedingly clear dividing line between the concept of nature and moral values or disvalues; he says unambiguously that nature has nothing whatsoever to do with moral good and evil, whether in the sense of the lawful as opposed to the miraculous, the ordinary as opposed to the rare, or the spontaneous as opposed to the artificial.[2267] If one sees the essence of the authoritative Enlightenment concept of nature in the interweaving of being and ought, then it appears anything but accidental or surprising that Hume immediately beforehand made his famous distinction between "is" and "ought," considering the imperceptible transition from the former to the latter as the true basis of prevailing or "vulgar" moral systems.[2268] It has recently been attempted, in the interest of modern efforts to derive ought from is, to trivialize Hume's distinction, among other things by claiming that Hume himself derives an ought or a morality from a being or from socio-anthropological entities.[2269] This view, in my opinion, rests on a serious misunderstanding. Hume does not deny the trivial truth that the phenomenon of morality or the idea of an ought arises from a being, if by this is meant certain

pre-Enlightenment past and the dominant ideology of that time: doing so would reveal the questionable nature of the supposed link. Crime, even organized crime, was not invented by Sade—and conversely: totalitarianism, at least in its victorious variants, ideologically appeals not least to the humanistic legacy or to the idea of man as God in the historical universe.

The relative naïveté of Crocker's personal philosophy of history stems from a naïve rationalistic view that assumes a necessary, foreseeable connection between subjective attitudes and the course of history.

2266 See above, Chapter II, Section 1.

2267 *Treatise*, III, 1, 2 = p. 473 ff.

2268 *op. cit.*, III, 1, 1 = p. 469 f.

2269 MacIntyre, *Hume on "is" and "ought"*, esp. 39 ff. Against this especially the remarks of Hudson, *Hume on is and ought*, esp. 79 f.

circumstances under which the emergence of morality becomes necessary to satisfy the practical needs of socially living humans. Anyone can admit this—and above all, the sociologically-anthropologically oriented skeptic insists on it, who precisely uses this assumption to combat the interweaving of being and ought, since he, like Hume, understands something else by it. As the expulsion of the normative from the concept of nature unmistakably shows, Hume does not deny the origin of the idea of ought from an empirically given being, but rather the deductive derivation of the ought from a being regarded as inherently value-laden. Ought and morality, in other words, have no ontological foundation (already for epistemological reasons Hume could not have advocated such a thesis)—they do not necessarily root in the constitution of a being that in reality would only be the projection of the ought into ontology. This has nothing to do with the view that morality and ought require certain objective conditions to come into existence at all. For the view that Hume combats with the separation of being and ought, morality and ought do not even arise but exist in the things themselves.[2270] The paragraph in which Hume formulates his separation of being and ought concludes with the remark: "the distinction of vice and virtue is not found merely on the relation of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason.[2271]" We already know that it was the moral philosophical school of Balguy and Price that believed in the objective existence of moral values and at the same time in the exclusive competence of reason in discovering them. What polemical target Hume had in mind when he wrote these

2270 MacIntyre rightly emphasizes the difference between Hume's material ethics and Kant's formalism, but it is at least one-sided to see the reason for this difference solely in the fact that Hume derives morality from a being, while Kant does not. This is correct insofar as Hume's derivation of morality from socio-anthropological factors must entail the primacy of the material in morality, but on the other hand, Kant shares with Hume the view that the "ought" cannot be deduced from a value-laden thing-in-itself. The shared stance on this issue is connected to the common point in Hume's and Kant's epistemology, namely agnosticism regarding the thing-in-itself, while the equally important difference between the two—Kant's prioritization of the formal—also has an epistemological basis: namely, the fundamentally different status of the intellect in Hume and Kant.

2271 *Treatise*, III, 1, 1 = p. 470.

words is therefore clear.[2272] As said, the Balguy-Price school shared Shaftesbury's school's concern for an ontological grounding of morality completely, only that it relied on the intellect. Since Hume rejected both fundamental elements of the former's thinking, he also had to reject in the latter what it shared with the former. Namely, if Hume generally follows the anti-intellectualist tendency of the Shaftesbury school, he certainly does not follow it regarding the ontological grounding of morality. Had he wanted, as a follower of Shaftesbury's or Hutcheson's philosophy of feeling, to derive ought from being, he would have had to share Shaftesbury's ontology and forget every skepticism or distinction between nature and norm. But since he sets ontology aside, he also does not feel obliged to regard feeling as originally good, and at first contents himself with the priority of feeling independent of signs. (Only thus, moreover, can it be explained why in the introduction of the Treatise he mentions, alongside Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, also Mandeville among his British forerunners; that structures are adopted to be placed in the service of one's own basic stance was shown not only by the reception of the Shaftesbury school by Hume, but also—this time in the opposite sense—by Hume's reception by Hamann.)[2273]

If, then, the derivation of morality from an empirically given being in Hume is based on its grounding in socially relevant feelings, the Humean separation of ought and morality from a value-defined being is expressed, on the other hand, in that these feelings themselves are not regarded as originally good. But Hume also does not want to classify them as originally evil; rather, he avoids any binding or in toto irrevocable statement about them and points instead to a variety of factors and possibilities. One function of this anthropological stance is his rejection of the "philosophical" or "idle fiction" known as the state of nature:[2274] neither paradise nor the war of all against all had originally existed. One would now expect that Hume, since he regards justice and morality as unthinkable both in the former and in the latter case (in paradise such concepts are superfluous, in the war of all against all impossible), would assume the existence of an original organization already present in the beginnings of human history. He

2272 Cf. the remark against Wollaston, *loc. cit.*, 461.

2273 See below, Chapter VIII, Section 2 b.

2274 *Treatise*, III, 2, 2 = p. 493 ff.

does so insofar as, unlike Hobbes, he does not let the beginning of morality coincide with that of government or the state, but connects it with the existence of such pre-state forms of socialization as the family and the clan. On the other hand, he emphatically stresses that justice is a product of convention, and thus he agrees with Hobbes at a decisive point, especially as he names the restraining of the "selfishness and confin'd generosity of men" as the reason for this convention. At the same time, however, he keeps the anthropological pessimism that could arise from this thesis in check by saying that the aforementioned (innate) "qualities of mind" are not always active but would only become "animated" when the scarcity of goods is felt.[2275] Thus, both necessity and self-love are negatively necessary for the emergence of justice.

If Hume takes the first step toward absolute skepticism through the separation of being and ought, or nature and norm, he makes every effort to avoid the second and final step. He does not want to become a Hobbes,[2276] and the first thing he undertakes in this regard is to keep

2275 *loc. cit.*, 495.

2276 This is shown not least in the tonal shift noticeable when comparing the moral-philosophical discussions of the *Treatise* with those of the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, which led commentators such as Selby-Bigge to the thesis that the later Hume had established a significantly new or more optimistic moral theory, in which sympathy as mere "communication of feelings" was largely replaced by sympathy as "benevolence." I share J. Stewart's opinion that no such break is detectable in Hume's development (*The Moral and Political Philosophy of D. Hume*, 329 ff.), but I would ground it in the fact that the position presented in the *Treatise* was ambiguous enough to later allow a significant tonal shift without substantive break. The tonal shift itself was more personally-psychologically motivated. Hume's effort to live in pleasant harmony with his environment and to mean something both good and important in its eyes (see *My Own Life*, *Essays*, I, 7 f.) is well known; in Hume's concrete environment, however, a new Hobbes would hardly have been acceptable. He thus adapts to the prevailing moralizing tone all the more effortlessly and willingly, since he does not want to be regarded as an immoralist and does not feel himself to be one. For this reason, he also adopts the scientifically misleading claim of the moralists that whoever thinks well of mankind in general renders better service to morality than the pessimists (*Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature*, *Essays*, I, 151). Hume increasingly tends to view things as benevolently as possible and to extract the best possible from man's selfishness (his later interest in Butler is symptomatic here). He

his anthropology as open and flexible as possible, in order not to endanger or to perhaps even fortify morality through the priority of feeling. Since Hume, even in this positive attempt to link morality and feeling, never unconditionally subscribes to optimistic anthropology (formulations like "there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself"[2277] are not rare), he must argue on two levels at once and thus, in my view, becomes entangled in at least two decisive logical contradictions. The first arises when Hume tries to support the so-called "artificial virtues" through the "natural virtues." The concept of justice admittedly necessarily refers to the concept of moral virtue, but morality is supposed to stand higher than mere justice and to be based on "natural virtues".[2278] Justice may be artificial, but the feeling of its morality is said to be natural[2279] (that moral judgments in general are connected with specific feelings of pleasure and pain is explained by Hume elsewhere).[2280] This construction is clearly deployed to dispel the suspicion that the moral is simply artificial. Nevertheless, it is not clear why the moral feelings, which are supposed to be natural (and this can sensibly only mean: originally inherent in human beings), cannot themselves establish justice among men, but only after some time, when the artificial creation of justice has already occurred, become strong enough to provide the desired moral foundation for justice and social life in general. As Hume explicitly assures us, humans are "at first induc'd only by a regard to interest; and this motiv, on the first formation of society, is sufficiently strong and forcible... Self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice." Only after a society has grown numerous, or after a nation has formed, does that sympathy arise

employs the following strategy: he emphasizes the socially beneficial consequences of selfish actions so strongly that the consequences of the action eventually appear conflated with its motivation, or that the original motivation becomes irrelevant (see e.g. *Of the Dignity…*, *Essays* I, 155 and *Enquiry*, V, 2 in *Essays* II, 207). In this way, Hume attempts to make amends for some of the youthful sharpness of the *Treatise*, whose complete public failure was never forgotten.

2277 *Treatise*, III, 2, 1 = p. 481.

2278 *op. cit.*, III, 2, 2 = p. 498.

2279 *op. cit.*, III, 3, 6 = p. 619.

2280 *op. cit.*, III, 1, 1 = p. 455 ff.

which enables insight into the general good and the purely moral consideration of justice.[2281] If sympathy in this form has purely historical preconditions, it cannot be an attribute of human nature or a "natural virtue." Hume quietly undertakes a reversal of historical sequence by elevating a characteristic that was originally acquired, but now appears deeply rooted and indispensable, to the status of an anthropological constant, which places him in the desired position to subsequently speak of human nature at least partially as a benevolent moralist and to neutralize the logical consequences of his initial agreement with the pessimistic view.

This reversal of historical sequence is reflected in a central and quasi-programmatic terminological reversal. The sympathy that supports the moral feeling is supposed, as said, in contrast to artificial justice, to be a "natural virtue" and completely independent of "artifice and contrivance of men";[2282] in other places, however, justice is called a "natural obligation" as opposed to a "moral obligation",[2283] and it is emphasized that the "limited generosity" (=selfishness) that decisively influences the emergence of justice is "natural," even when it is directly contrasted with the "extensive sympathy on which our sentiments of virtue depend".[2284] Hume wavers when it comes to attributing the label "natural," because he cannot definitively decide between anthropological skepticism and confidence. It should be noted that if Hume had wanted to completely leave aside his connections to skepticism and to self-love, he could very well have foregrounded sympathy as a moral phenomenon historically, since his historical construction begins with the family, within which such sympathy could most strongly be presumed, and not with the state, which could properly only function as the founder of justice. Historical priority of justice, however, means anthropological priority of self-love. Furthermore, it is not clear—unless one is already a convinced moralist or (like Hume) wishes to be one—why moral feeling is needed at all if self-love by its own action is capable of calling justice into being. The artificiality of justice does not mean it is an uncertain or perishable institution. Hume writes: "The interest, on which justice is founded, is

2281 *op. cit.*, III, 2, 2 = p. 499 f.
2282 *op. cit.*, III, 3, 1 = p. 574.
2283 *op. cit.*, III, 2, 2 = p. 498.
2284 *op. cit.*, III, 3, 1 = p. 586.

the greatest imaginable, and extends to all times and places... All these causes render the rules of justice steadfast and immutable; at least, as immutable as human nature. And if they were founded on original instincts, cou'd they have any greater stability?[2285]". The same meaning lies behind the thesis that justice is "artificial" but not "arbitrary".[2286] The naturalness or non-arbitrariness of justice refers only to the fact that justice exists or must exist at all for the regulation of human relations. If there are such regulations that are perceived as just and demonstrably functional, then the problem of justice must be considered solved based on these premises, quite independently of whether their specific content corresponds to an eternal idea of right or not. In other words: even if the existence of justice at all is natural in Hume's sense (i.e., inevitable, given the constantly operating anthropological constants or feelings), the concrete content of its commandments remains undetermined, that is, it can be decided in a decisionistic way or with regard to particular social needs and circumstances. The same applies to moral feeling: that I must feel something as moral has no necessary relation to what I regard as moral. Hume entirely sidesteps this central question, and not by accident: the power of socially established standards, which he often emphasizes, cannot logically be reconciled with the naturalness or immutability of the concrete content of the commandment of justice or morality. Therefore, he finds it more convenient to obscure or compensate for the unpredictability of the What with the inevitability of the That.[2287]

The second fundamental contradiction in Hume's moral philosophy becomes visible in his definition of what is supposed to carry the moral feeling, namely sympathy. As a "communication of feelings and passions," it is accessible to everyone, since "the minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations".[2288] Sympathy thus builds the bridge between the individual and society, making

2285 *op. cit.*, III, 3, 4 = p. 620.
2286 *op. cit.*, III, 2, 1 = p. 484.
2287 Cf. our remarks on Hobbes (Chapter II, Section 3 c) and Locke (Chapter VI, Section 3 b).
2288 *Treatise* III, 1, 1 = p. 575, cf. II, 2, 5 = p. 365: "the minds of men are mirrors to one another."

social life possible.[2289] Especially the later Hume tends to identify self-love with moral solipsism in order to underscore the social uselessness of self-love and its opposition to sympathy in general and to "benevolence" in particular.[2290] In the "Treatise," however, it is made clear in several passages that the sympathetic process can lead to hatred or Schadenfreude when it is marked by comparison between our own situation and that of others.[2291] All passions have a sympathetic basis: "Whatever other passions we may be actuated by; pride, ambition, avarice, curiosity, revenge, or lust; the soul or animating principle of them all is sympathy; nor wou'd they have any force, were we to abstract entirely from the thoughts and sentiments of the others".[2292] Hume could only have set aside this aspect of sympathy, which would create theoretical difficulties for him, if he had sharply opposed sympathy to self-love within a radically optimistic anthropology. But he does not do that. On the contrary, he emphasizes that people "always" judge based on comparisons between their own situation and that of others, precisely because they are governed by feeling[2293] (thus the dominance of feeling here seems to be neither a special advantage nor a preparation for the moral). In addition, sympathy with someone does not at all necessarily mean a willingness to sacrifice one's own interests.[2294] In order to secure the transition to morality through sympathy, Hume therefore finds himself compelled to divide it into two types, saying that the "weak" produces hatred or contempt, while the strong produces love.[2295]

This is already the distinction that appears in Book III under the names "limited" and "extensive sympathy." Moral judgments actually rest on the latter, but at the same time they require a detachment of the individual from the immediate environment and especially from the comparison of one's own situation with that of others. Conflicts and

2289 *op. cit.*, II, 2, 2 = p. 340.
2290 See for example *Enquiry*, VI, 1 = *Essays* II, 218.
2291 *Treatise* II, 2, 8 = p. 375 ff.
2292 *op. cit.*, II, 2, 5 = p. 363; the sharp opposition between "comparison" and "sympathy" in III, 3, 2 (= p. 593) occurs in the context of the depiction of "extensive sympathy," see below.
2293 *op. cit.*, II, 2, 8 = p. 372.
2294 *op. cit.*, III, 3, 1 = p. 586.
2295 *op. cit.*, II, 2, 9 = p. 385.

contradictions that necessarily arise from such comparisons are to be avoided as follows: "we fix on some steady and general points of view; and always, in our thoughts, place ourselves in them, whatever may be our present situation... we overlook our own interest in those general judgements".[2296] However, the concepts of "extensive sympathy" and the "impartial spectator" are by no means theoretically grounded by Hume's anthropology and epistemology. First, they have hardly any practical relevance if it is indeed the case, as Hume claimed, that people "always" judge based on comparisons and are furthermore hardly willing to show generosity outside their narrow circle.[2297] On the other hand, in order to achieve "extensive sympathy" and thus moral judgments, Hume must imperceptibly but surely sever the main pillar of his epistemology—namely the thesis of the subordinate status of the intellect. The detachment from the narrow personal standpoint implies a parallel detachment from feelings and at the same time a more intensive activity of the intellect, which alone is capable of making theoretical judgments about the interest of society as a whole, especially since these judgments must be abstract from the outset because the one judging has only a fragment of society—over whose general interest he is supposed to judge—present in his personal imagination, and a conflict of interest between this fragment and the social whole cannot be excluded a priori. The possibility of such sympathy, which can support moral judgments and thus avert the complete artificiality of morality, therefore demands the solemn reintroduction of that faculty whose predominance Hume precisely intended to curtail.[2298] It is no coincidence that within his discussions on extensive sympathy, Hume himself offers a rather unusual praise of the activity of reason.[2299] He could only have been consistent if he had either eliminated the skeptical sides of his anthropology, or if he had at least partially rehabilitated the intellect epistemologically, or if he had renounced extensive sympathy and moral judgments. But he did none of these things.

2296 *op. cit.*, III, 3, 1 = p. 581 f.
2297 *op. cit.*, III, 3, 3 = p. 602.
2298 See the good analysis by Mercer, *Sympathy and Ethics*, 66 ff.
2299 *Treatise* III, 3, 1 = p. 583: "reason requires such an impartial conduct," "reason, which is able to oppose our passion," etc.

3. The Consistent Ones: La Mettrie and Sade

La Mettrie, like Hume, accepts the separation of nature and moral norm and even turns it, in important respects, into an irreconcilable opposition. For unlike Hume, he does not want to recognize a qualitative difference between self-love and (extensive) sympathy that could suggest the naturalness of morality as opposed to the mere artificiality of justice—hence he also has no need for any smuggled-in rationality. Socially relevant (and not merely theoretical) rationality for him is the highest refinement of the basic instinct (Rousseauism with reversed signs!), which consists mainly in the drive for self-preservation and assertion. Self-love in this broadest sense cannot be dismissed as moral solipsism, as Hume at least tended to do, because it is what drives the individual to connect with society (not least with the aim of securing the most advantageous position within it) and thus decisively contributes to the formation of social institutions. Not only justice, as in Hume, but also morality is here the product of self-love. Morality, like justice, serves the preservation of society, namely the protection of individuals, and in this respect it is indeed a product of convention; it is natural only in the sense that it is based on the human need for protection and security—namely on an aspect of self-love. The other important side of self-love, namely the drive for assertion or the need for personal satisfaction regardless of the consequences for the social whole, remains unabated even after the establishment of an organized society—that is, after the emergence of justice and morality—and seeks to undermine them whenever it seems advantageous and can be done unpunished. Since morality in the broadest sense was born positively (out of the need for security and rules) and negatively (out of the necessary curbing of dangerous instincts) from self-love—since it is a continuation of self-love by other means—it can never fully assert itself, except when it concerns the preservation of society itself; as long as this seems to be secure, self-love permits itself everything. Or again: self-love masquerades as moral behavior when such behavior is praised and rewarded by society, or it appears—depending on circumstances and temperament

—as a blunt violation of moral rules when the individual expects greater benefit from doing so. But the root of both moral and immoral behavior is the same existential dimension, the same nature—which most clearly shows that nature and the moral or immoral in themselves have nothing to do with each other. The moral and the immoral are essentially labels, signals serving social expediency. Nature, says La Mettrie, is the striving for pleasure, whereas morality is the artificial covering or inhibition of nature: "il est naturel à l'homme de sentir, parce que c'est un corps animé; mais il ne lui est pas plus naturel d'être savant et vertueux que richement vêtu".[2300] He therefore makes the fundamental distinction between "nature réduite à elle-même"[2301] and those constructions with which attempts are made to give morality a natural-ontological foundation; thus philosophers "gratuitement fabriqué les idées innées, pour donner aux mots de vertu et de vice une espèce d'assiette qui en imposât et les fit prendre pour des choses réelles".[2302]

What is being scrutinized here is not only the "Scholasticism"; just as much, since this critique proceeds from a norm-free concept of nature, it also targets the approach of the normativist Enlightenment, radicalizing the Enlightenment's rehabilitation of sensibility in order to expel every moral norm and every spirit from the prevailing Enlightenment conception of nature. This functional transformation of anti-intellectualism under the sign of a non-moralizing basic attitude is revealed when La Mettrie regards spirit and pangs of conscience—or morality—as two sides of the same coin, but not in order to emphasize the indispensability of spirit, rather to highlight the irreconcilable opposition between spirit and happiness: "Il semble que l'esprit donne la torture au sentiment",[2303] "la réflexion est souvent presque un remords".[2304] Pangs of conscience, however, are not natural but artificial—moral; without them, a criminal, insofar as his actions are advantageous to him, can easily be happy.[2305] Happiness, the first existential goal, has therefore nothing inherently to do with morality,

2300 *Anti-Sénèque ou Discours sur le Bonheur* = *Œuvres* II, 89.
2301 *loc. cit.*, 116.
2302 *loc. cit.*, 117.
2303 *loc. cit.*, 91.
2304 *loc. cit.*, 92.
2305 *loc. cit.*, 151.

spirit, or wisdom; all these are "des ornements étrangers … Le bonheur semble tout vivifier, tout consommer par le sentiment".[2306] In the sense that humans, freed from moral inhibitions, do not hesitate to harm a fellow man when their own happiness requires it, La Mettrie says: "En général les hommes sont nés méchants".[2307] Or: "L'homme paraît en général un animal faux, rusé, dangereux, perfide etc.... Voilà à quoi se réduit en substance tout ce que je dis".[2308] In order to put an end to the war of all against all—which ultimately harms everyone—morality is established, whose source is therefore "le bien public".[2309] From a "institution politique" arise the concepts of virtue and vice,[2310] since so-called virtue in the absolute sense is merely "un vain son" and its content changes according to time and place.[2311] Precisely because morality is not natural—or, as we said earlier, a continuation of self-love by other means—such motivations as vanity or the pursuit of praise and reward prove extremely effective for securing its observance.[2312] Even in spheres of social life such as literature and philosophy, personal vanity is indispensable; performance would be much lesser without the desire for fame.[2313]

La Mettrie's views on the character and role of philosophy within a nihilistic perspective are highly remarkable. Since this perspective proceeds from a clean separation of being and ought,

2306 *loc. cit.*, 97.
2307 *loc. cit.*, 103.
2308 *loc. cit.*, 154 f.
2309 *loc. cit.*, 104.
2310 *loc. cit.*, 105.
2311 *loc. cit.*, 112 f.
2312 *loc. cit.*, 107, cf. 118.
2313 *oc. cit.*, 130. Already Hobbes had regarded the desire for knowledge as a special form of the general desire for power (*Leviathan* VIII = EW, III, 61) – and not merely in Bacon's technical-instrumental sense, but in a much deeper psychological-anthropological sense. Which essential points of Hobbes' thought La Mettrie adopts can easily be gathered from our analysis. In this, the question of direct literary influence in each case is rather secondary – more important is the observation of the continuity between early modern forms of naturalistic, self-preservation-centered anthropology and social theory and the nihilism of the Enlightenment. Machiavelli also comes into consideration with regard to La Mettrie, while Helvétius, alongside Hobbes, also appreciates La Rochefoucauld (see below note 138).

which in a second phase turns into an opposition between being and ought (this is the meaning of the juxtaposition of nature and morality in La Mettrie), philosophy here has no moral or educational task to fulfill, that is, it is not meant to preach an ought. "Je ne moralise, ni ne prêche, ni ne déclame, j'explique":[2314] in this La Mettrie sees the goal of his intellectual effort. Philosophy knows what the true nature of man is and what motivates his actions. Insofar as it gives practical advice, it can only recommend the pursuit of nature, of pleasure and happiness, but this recommendation is not to be understood as the establishment of a normative ought, merely as the refusal of philosophy to distance itself from the anthropologically given reality or to suppress it. The "ought" of nihilistic philosophy thus consists in letting the natural and fundamentally unchangeable stream of being flow freely—without protests or interventions—which, of course, amounts to the elimination of the ought as a practically relevant moral stance. From this arises the fundamental opposition of nihilistic philosophy to morality, which must set up an active ought and thus also intervene actively in the course of things and human behavior. Nihilistic philosophy is a *verstehende* (understanding) contemplation of nature; morality, by contrast, is a suppression of ("evil") nature for the sake of securing social life. The former is "natural," merely mirroring nature, while the latter is artificial or posited, as it is entwined with political institutions. Whoever wishes to live according to nature as interpreted by nihilistic philosophy will thereby become an enemy of morality and social institutions and must reckon with their severity: "Mais si tu veux vivre, prends-y garde, la politique n'est pas si commode que ma

2314 *loc. cit.*, 156. According to Vartanian, La Mettrie demands a "demoralization of philosophy in favor of a freedom of thought and an objectivity both equally uncompromising" (*Le philosophe selon La Mettrie*, 176). For him, philosophy is the humorous grasp of the meaninglessness of the world, whereby sober self-irony must turn into sarcasm against (orthodox) philosophers, who imagine that their abstract truths interest mankind (169, 172). Vartanian rightly also notes that La Mettrie's apolitical stance complements his amoralism (175). However, I cannot follow him when he traces La Mettrie's attitude to the supposed immaturity of the Enlightenment movement (178). Whether La Mettrie would have thought differently within the circle of the normatively minded and socially engaged Encyclopédistes is more than doubtful. Vartanian, in other words, hesitates to allow La Mettrie's nihilism its due independence of mind.

philosophie. La justice est sa fille; les bourreaux et les gibets sont à ses ordres; crains-les plus que ta conscience et les dieux".[2315] One should note precisely that cruelty operates on both sides: "Les ours, les lions, les tigres, aiment à dévorer les autres animaux. Féroce comme eux, il est trop juste que tu cèdes aux mêmes inclinations. Je te plains cependant de te repaître ainsi des calamités publiques etc.[2316]" Compassion and understanding can therefore only be expected from nihilistic philosophy, not from morality, however much the latter may deify man in words. For the aim of philosophy is understanding—*abstraction faite de toutes conséquences*—while the task of morality is the foundation and maintenance of social order.[2317] This could be called the humanity of nihilism. It is based on the view that there is no ought whose violation would make a man contemptible or require harsh countermeasures in the name of injured morality. A man ought not to be despised for his immorality any more than a dog ought to be despised: this is at least one good outcome that the leveling of man and dog brings. La Mettrie says it outright: "Savez-vous pourquoi je fais encore quelque cas des hommes? C'est que je les crois sérieusement des machines. Dans l'hypothèse contraire, j'en connais peu dont la société fût estimable. Le matérialisme est l'antidote de la misanthropie".[2318] The understanding, nihilistic contemplation, however, cannot support a programmatic humanism, since it neither can nor wants to bring forward arguments against the annihilation of the human person; although it understands the annihilator, it cannot even protect the victim argumentatively. On the other hand, it can remind us that it is precisely in the name of norms that grand-scale annihilations of humans have been perpetrated throughout history.

Since philosophy aims at truth while morality pursues practical goals, it follows that the one has nothing to do with the other—and also (since only philosophy knows the truth and morality must oppose this philosophy) that morality, just like religion, rests on illusions and prejudices that are nonetheless vital for society; it produces "des préjugés et des erreurs qui font la base fondamentale de la société".[2319]

2315 *loc. cit.*, 152.
2316 *loc. cit.*, 153.
2317 *Discours préliminaire*, *Œuvres* I, 6.
2318 *Système d'Épicure*, XLVI = *Œuvres* I, 248.
2319 *Discours préliminaire*, *Œuvres* I, 7.

Since the truth that nihilistic philosophy recognizes can never serve as the foundation of social life, truth and philosophy must remain parasitic marginal phenomena. Like Hume,[2320] La Mettrie also emphasizes the complete uselessness of the speculations of the study for life, a fact proven by the behavior of other, non-nihilistic philosophers who, despite their theories, often follow the most absurd fashions and customs without hesitation.[2321] Absolute skepticism paralyzes all activity—yet since it is the unavoidable fate of the one who knows the truth[2322] (that is, skepticism consists not merely in agnosticism but in relativism arising from knowledge of the factors underpinning social phenomena), it must be set aside in everyday life, where one must operate within circumstances based on conventions and illusions. And if someone publicly proclaims the nihilistic truth, he meets deaf ears, because this truth directly contradicts the interests of society, which are intimately bound up with its illusions: "Les matérialistes ont beau prouver que l'homme n'est qu'une machine, le peuple n'en croira jamais rien. Le même instinct qui le retient à la vie, lui donne assez de vanité pour croire son âme immortelle etc.[2323]" If the knower of the nihilistic truth wants to act practically, he must enter the realm of illusion and—since he understands its necessity and mechanisms better than anyone else—consciously and systematically put it at the service of society. The fight for Enlightenment and reason is harmful if truth itself is harmful. If one believes in the indispensability of religion and superstition for moral discipline, then one must use them without hesitation.[2324] In this crucial respect, La

2320 *Treatise* I, 4, 7 = p. 268 ff.
2321 *Discours préliminaire*, *Œuvres* I, 319 f.
2322 *loc. cit.*, 30 f.
2323 *loc. cit.*, 15.
2324 *loc. cit.*, 43. Starke interprets such statements of La Mettrie's as a "ruse" with regard to the prevailing circumstances (*Die politische Position La Mettries*, 130, cf. 144: here La Mettrie's anthropology is characterized as such a "ruse," though Starke hardly bothers to explain why a ruse would be necessary here, since La Mettrie was attacked by both conservatives and Enlightenment thinkers precisely because of this anthropology). He attempts to politically "rescue" La Mettrie, because as a Marxist he wishes to deny that nihilistic consequences – and indeed logically flawless ones – could emerge from materialism and naturalistic anthropology. He does this by confusing the levels of the descriptive and the prescriptive, and then introducing this

Mettrie agrees with Machiavelli and Hobbes; but, like them, as a thinker speaking from the standpoint of practice, he overlooks that to make illusion socially effective, one must be entwined with it and believe in it as a final truth. The nihilistic thinker may be even more useless than La Mettrie himself described.

Since morality is the suppression of nature, it must be supplemented by careful and patient education. As shown in another context, the concern with education is a result both of the pessimistic and the optimistic anthropological outlook. La Mettrie sees education as serving the protection of society from the dangerous nature of man. But since education, like morality, is artificial, it can form only a crust over the drives, a crust that tears at every outbreak of the soul's ever-boiling interior: "Vraies girouettes, nous tournons donc sans cesse au vent de l'éducation, et nous retournons ensuite à notre premier point, quand nos organes remis à leur ton naturel, nous rappellent à eux, et nous font suivre leurs dispositions primitives. Alors les anciennes déterminations renaissent; celles que l'art avait produites s'effacent etc.[2325]" Here, it is clearly a matter of education as suppression of the drives. Despite his belief in its necessity, La Mettrie sometimes flirts with the idea of an education that would at least partially put the theoretical insights of nihilistic philosophy into practice and thereby make man happier—by driving out the phantoms that tyrannize him and by fostering a cheerful satisfaction of sensuality. That would be the precondition for lasting health of the soul. When La Mettrie thinks this way, he simultaneously shares and radicalizes the anti-ascetic, emancipatory impulse of the Enlightenment, and tempers his nihilism

confusion into his interpretation of La Mettrie's texts. That for La Mettrie state and religion are based on violence and fraud means for Starke eo ipso a call for their abolition; from La Mettrie's distrust of the effectiveness of reformist efforts, Starke concludes that La Mettrie advocated violent revolution instead of peaceful reform; from La Mettrie's thesis that morality is a social phenomenon, Starke infers that La Mettrie wanted a social, not individualistic, morality and happiness, even associating him with Rousseau (130, 131, 134 f., 142). Thus he initially accuses him politically only of tactical mistakes or "instability and recklessness" (141), only to finally free himself from the awkwardness by asserting that La Mettrie did not view man historically but metaphysically, and therefore could not truly believe in a non-dominating society, thus remaining an "anarchistic-individualistic" element.

2325 *Anti-Sénèque* = *Œuvres* II, 122 f.

with a view toward a eudaimonistic ideal, one that would not, however, shatter society. Yet even so, this barely changes his fundamental position. For that possibility could only be realized either on the social level and within certain limits, or fully only within private circles. Unrestrained gratification of the drives of all members of society would inevitably lead to its dissolution, and thus cannot be considered a real prospect. La Mettrie does not dwell long on it either.

The partly ironic, partly blasé reserve toward existing institutions connected with this may have led Sade to the remark that La Mettrie had not fully expressed his deepest thoughts.[2326] In the "celebre La Mettrie"[2327] he nonetheless recognizes—and rightly so—a spiritual father. This was meant not only anthropologically and morally, but also ontologically: for all three levels are interconnected in Sade with the same logical coherence as in La Mettrie. Sade, for instance, draws on La Mettrie's materialist biology to explain the nature of life, though he also considers Holbach.[2328] Holbach's influence on Sade, however, could only extend to the ontological sphere, but there it seems to have been significant,[2329] especially since Holbach offers a systematically articulated account. When Sade called the *System of Nature* "the basis of my philosophy,[2330]" he not only made clear his intellectual lineage but also the systematic ambition of his thought. Logically, he begins where the ontological elevation of nature and matter culminated—namely in the thesis that nature constitutes an autonomous whole and the cause of itself, for it is "matter in action," in which movement inherently resides.[2331] But if nature encompasses everything that exists, man too must be pure nature, and his essential determination must derive from that of nature. The thesis of the naturalness of man, already associated with a skeptical outlook since the early modern period,[2332] now becomes the

2326 *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 171 note.
2327 *op. cit.*, IV = OC, IX, 115.
2328 Deprun, *Sade et la philosophie biologique*, 190 ff.
2329 Leduc, *Sources de l'athéisme de Sade*, 11 ff.
2330 Letter to the Marquise de Sade from the end of November 1783 = OC, XII, 418.
2331 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, III = OC, III, 195; *Nouvelle Justine*, IV = OC, VI, 192; *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 51.
2332 See above, Chapter II, Section 3 b.

starting point of a programmatic nihilism; for the fundamental nihilist separation of nature and norm could only be fully realized through the conscious negation of the normative concept of nature that had meanwhile been developed by the Enlightenment. Indeed, Sade's concept of nature in crucial respects inverts or reinterprets fundamental aspects of the normative concept of nature. In the latter, evil functioned as a mere shadow within a being fundamentally directed toward the good—it was merely that incidental suffering which affected individual fates unpleasantly, and thus from the limited perspective of individuals appeared as evil. Sade, who must have known Robinet's work,[2333] takes up the idea of the balance in nature being based equally on good and evil,[2334] while simultaneously—within the nihilistic abolition of the distinction between being and seeming, whereby former seeming becomes sole being—granting full primacy to evil. For him too, evil is of course only apparent; but he does not think of it as concealing the (hidden) omnipotence of good, but precisely as testifying to the fictitiousness of the good. The disappearance of ontologically grounded goodness forbids speaking of evil as "evil" in a normative sense—for that would imply the reality of goodness, which alone makes normative judgments possible. With this semasiological reservation, which we must also keep in mind for what follows, evil constitutes the natural as such, since upheaval and destruction—which must entail the downfall or subjugation of the weaker—are inseparable from the course of nature.[2335]

In light of this essential characterization of nature, it becomes easily understandable what Sade means when he fully endorses the modern thesis that man is nature.[2336] The complete materiality of nature first of all means that man too is pure matter, whose finer part constitutes the soul.[2337] The immanence of movement in matter, again, appears in man as a continuous restlessness or vital force that generates needs and simultaneously strives for their satisfaction. Following Helvetius — and also moralists like Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld, as well as the broader anti-intellectualist trend of the

2333 Deprun, *Sade et la philosophie biologique*, 198 f.
2334 *Justine* I = OC, III, 209.
2335 *Nouvelle Justine* XVI = OC, VII, 212.
2336 *op. cit.*, V = OC, VI, 206.
2337 *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 52 f., 58.

Enlightenment—[2338]Sade sees in the passions, whose voice merely expresses the deepest stirrings of human matter, the engine of human activity and compares their function to that of motion in physics.[2339] But beyond this dynamic materiality, the naturalness of man has a second implication. The activity triggered by materially rooted vitality must behave according to the law of nature in two respects: it must arise from it (insofar as it is inherent to man himself) and serve it (insofar as it encompasses not only man but also the rest of nature). Human activity springs from the law of nature in that it is set into motion by the instinct of self-preservation and the principle of pleasure. This constitutes the first commandment of nature — itself directed toward self-preservation — in regard to man: to preserve oneself, that is, to strive unceasingly for happiness and pleasure, to give free rein to one's own egoism, and to show no regard for the harm of others.[2340] Standing under the sign of an insatiable pursuit of pleasure by definition, self-preservation cannot consist merely in vegetative existence. As for Hobbes,[2341] so too for Sade, self-preservation means self-enhancement, expansion of one's own power, especially since observation shows that nothing living in nature can maintain itself over time without constant growth; the end of growth marks the beginning of aging, the vestibule of death. In this light, Sade is in fact not questioning the primary importance of the pleasure principle when he occasionally regards the drive for domination and power as the deepest motivation of human action.[2342] Power and pleasure are indeed intertwined in multiple ways. First, power can secure pleasure either by removing external obstacles or additionally by causing displeasure to others; for according to Sade, pleasure is most fully felt precisely when it contrasts with the suffering of others, when it thus becomes pure personal property that visibly distinguishes the possessor from the dispossessed and thereby retroactively confirms his position of power.[2343] Power can thus, second, itself become

2338 See above, Chapter VI, Section 3 c.
2339 *Juliette* IV = OC, IX, 135; cf. Leduc, *Sources de l'athéisme*, 29 f.
2340 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, III = OC, III, 437; *Nouvelle Justine* IV = OC, VI, 194; *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 104, 187 f.
2341 See above, Chapter II, Section 3 c.
2342 *Juliette* II = OC, VIII, 305 f.
2343 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, V = OC, III, 529.

pleasure. Sade's prefiguration of Freud's view that sexuality pervades all other instincts[2344] rests not least on the insight into the entanglement of sexuality and power. Sexuality satisfies itself through the domination of the object of pleasure, and since this domination is felt with full existential intensity not only by the dominated but also by the dominator, the highest intensification of sexual pleasure coincides in the latter with the extreme unfolding of the feeling of power.

In this way, then, the activity of human matter springs from the law of nature. At the same time, it serves it by constantly confirming the so-called evil as the operational mode of nature. If nature must, for the sake of its own self-preservation, destroy its weaker components — and thus the right of the stronger becomes its own most intrinsic right —[2345] then only those individuals can be useful to it who experience and pursue self-preservation as an increase of power. Crimes are thus not only, as explained above, genetically rooted but also functionally anchored in nature; they guarantee the smooth operation of natural law, or are even identical with it.[2346] The destruction they cause is merely an optical illusion, since nothing in nature can be completely annihilated—everything only transforms into other forms.[2347] Thus, and also because crime arises from the voice of nature within man and is embedded in his biostructure,[2348] its condemnation from a normativist perspective lacks any (onto)logical basis: for "les crimes sont impossibles à l'homme".[2349] The flipside of this same thought lies in the sharp opposition between norm or moral law and nature, whereby Sade follows La Mettrie directly and the Hobbesian tradition indirectly. As a pure creature of nature, man knows no moral norm;[2350] virtue does not spring from the womb of nature but arises in the (ultimately meaningless) struggle against it;[2351] pangs of conscience are the offspring of education and fear[2352] and can be

2344 *Juliette* II = OC, VIII, 299.
2345 *op. cit.*, I = OC, VIII, 201 f.
2346 *op. cit.*, II, IV = OC, VIII, 297 and IX, 138.
2347 *op. cit.*, III, IV = OC, VIII, 399 and IX, 173 f.
2348 *op. cit.*, I = OC, VIII, 104.
2349 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, VII = OC, III, 543 f.
2350 *Juliette* V = OC, IX, 290 f.
2351 *op. cit.*, I = OC, VIII, 59 f.
2352 *loc. cit.*, 24 f.

eradicated — whereupon crime, in itself and as such, can provide pleasure, precisely because it is natural, whereas the moral law is artificial.[2353] Intellectually revealing is Sade's reference to the relativity of law and custom depending on place, time, and nation, in support of his thesis of the unnaturalness of morality;[2354] Montesquieu's name is not left unmentioned.[2355] In Sade's phenomenalist perspective, the inherently contradictory diversity of the particular manifestations of morality must be interpreted as evidence for the absence of any essence of morality at all — something that can again be explained and confirmed through the analysis of nature and of man as a creature of nature.

Morality is therefore convention and thus fiction; it takes shape in the pursuit of particular interests under the conditions of social coexistence—or more precisely: it represents the manner in which interests are asserted once social coexistence has, for better or worse, become a reality from which each individual must nolens volens proceed. That even the wicked can manage to appear virtuous when it is in their own interest[2356] is, for Sade, proof that morality does not arise from nature but from the calculating intellect (of the weak), which carefully weighs utility. The fundamental link between interest and intellect, however—especially regarding the strong—can also be understood quite differently, precisely as the theological opponents of Enlightenment utilitarianism feared. If the intellect determines that existential satisfaction is withheld far more by morality than it is granted by social coexistence, it must decide for crime.[2357] Yet it is not the originator of crime, merely its receiver, an impartial interpreter and conscientious executor of the commands of nature's voice; Sade conceives it purely instrumentally, calling it "la balance avec laquelle nous pesons les objets".[2358] Just as the enlightened self-love of the

2353 *loc. cit.*, 171, 195 f.; cf. *op. cit.*, IV = OC, IX, 107 f.
2354 *op. cit.*, IV = OC, IX, 187 ff.
2355 *op. cit.*, I = OC, VIII, 171 note. Sade claims that Montesquieu, like La Mettrie, concealed the ultimate consequences of his position. He polemicizes sharply against Montesquieu's natural-law statements and, with regard to his ambiguity, calls him a "demi-philosophe" (*op. cit.*, IV = OC, IX, 16 f., 178).
2356 *Aline et Valcour* (Hist. de Sainville) = OC, IV, 203.
2357 *Justine* I = OC, III, 144.
2358 *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 42 f.

normativists functions—but with the opposite intention—so too the intellect of Sade's criminal is capable of sacrificing short-term gratification in favor of a later and greater satisfaction; the criminal is not a blind brute, but acts coolly and (instrumentally) rationally whenever necessary. Sade even demands—at least ideally—that sovereign self-mastery, or *apathie*, be displayed not only in the preparation but also in the execution of the crime.[2359] For it is precisely the loss of this self-mastery that would betray that, for the criminal, the act is not yet something fully natural and normal; only noble souls or novices at crime, Sade remarks, confuse the intensification of pleasure with mental disarray. One should not lose composure just when—through crime—one finally becomes one with nature. In this way, he inverts the traditional moral topos that self-control would mark the first and decisive step toward the triumph of normative reason, rendering it meaningless.

We said that Sade's conception of the functioning of nature amounts to a reversal—or reinterpretation—of the *tout est bien*. In his later work, there is a general increase in the tendency simply to invert normative concepts, so as to deploy their inner logic against their original authors and defenders. Thus Sade inverts the Christian conception of God, labeling Him a "vampire" or a "vilain",[2360] seeming, at least outwardly, to assume His existence. He treats the normative concept of nature similarly, replacing the good mother Nature with nature as the enemy of mankind as such.[2361] From this, some have wanted to conclude that Sade, in reality, was unable—either logically or psychologically—to detach himself from the moral-ontological categories he so hated; that the call to crime was, fundamentally, a provocation or an act of vengeance by an "unhappy consciousness" against the evil God or evil Nature—a partly desperate, partly heroic rebellion.[2362] Yet there is no need to resort to existentialist

2359 *loc. cit.*, 104; *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, VI = OC, III, 527.

2360 *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 46, 47.

2361 *Nouvelle Justine* XI = OC, VII, 46.

2362 Klossowski, *Sade*, 59 ff., 71 ff. (cf. Camus, *L'Homme révolté*, 55 f.). However, Klossowski himself notes that in Sade there is alongside crime as revenge also crime as conformity with nature (71 ff.) and rightly considers both views contradictory. Sade would only contradict himself if he seriously meant the former, which he did not.

clichés to interpret Sade satisfactorily; intellectual-historical means suffice—at least in this case. When Sade denounces the malevolent God, he merely picks up, in his free and emphatic way, the argumentative thread that Bayle had begun to spin at the threshold of the Enlightenment, and that even Voltaire had followed in darker moments.[2363] Sade, however, believes in the evil God even less than Voltaire does, and when he calls God not only a "fantome abominable"[2364] but also a "ridicule fantome",[2365] he makes clear that his invocation of a malevolent God is not a personal affirmation of ontological fact, but rather a way to draw out the final logical consequences of Christian theodicy, given the undeniable function of evil in the world. In other words, Sade seemingly proceeds from the existence of God only to drive it ad absurdum, since, on that basis, crime could be presented as a *divinely* willed action—otherwise its important role in "God's world" would be inexplicable. Sade's criminal does not revolt against a non-existent God, but against the very idea of God—unreal yet immensely effective—insofar as it is linked to moral conscience and capable of paralyzing the will to crime and thus silencing the voice of nature.[2366] In this sense, crime means the sole dominion of man in the world after the death of God in man's conscience. The primacy of crime is the primacy of the human over the divine—if man is nature and if nature knows neither good nor evil.

Thus, man is in reality always and necessarily dependent only on morally colorless nature, not on the phantom of God; if, therefore, in Sade's perspective the possibilities of human freedom can become a real problem at all, it is only in relation to nature—and with the renunciation of any moral coloration of the concept of freedom. By considering and accepting the functioning of nature not only in its necessity but also in the multiplicity of possibilities contained within this necessity—and whose realization, in turn, helps this necessity unfold—man can complete nature through his own acts. His freedom thus consists in the unconditional and conscious obedience to nature—not merely as it *is*, but as it *could be*. Possibilities, however, are only

2363 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, III = OC, III, 395; *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 46 f. See above, Chapter VI, Section 5.
2364 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, III = OC, III, 394.
2365 *Nouvelle Justine* XV = OC, VII, 195.
2366 *Juliette* III = OC, VIII, 329.

opened up by the destruction of existing, rigidified realities (even if these as well as those must obey the same lawfulness), thus only through crime.[2367] Crime rejuvenates nature, and if it occurs with this intention—if the criminal is a philosopher in Sade's sense—then it can even be said that reason creates or enriches nature. In the pursuit of greater pleasure and power, the criminal reason brings forth combinations of which blind natural lawfulness is incapable, although it set the framework within which all this is even possible. The greatest of all crimes—the total destruction of the human race—would grant nature the greatest of all possibilities: to undertake and realize a new act of creation.[2368] Whether life can be totally eradicated without destroying nature itself, which tirelessly generates it, remains doubtful even for Sade.[2369] Nevertheless, the thought experiment illustrates in what ambiguous sense man could be free—indeed, in his way, become God—after having killed God in his conscience. Only the intention to exhaust the recognized possibilities of nature's functioning, incidentally, makes the drive to action of Sade's criminal understandable.

It is not with regard to the question of God, but precisely with regard to this activism that one can, if at all, speak of a logical inconsistency in Sade's thought. The goal of criminal activism is the return to nature—even to that identification with lifeless nature that the total annihilation of mankind would bring. The return to nature—or crime—thus becomes (indirectly) a "should" or a value, and it is also suggested that a departure from nature is possible—as if nature were not an all-encompassing necessity, and as if man were not wholly nature. Has culture reversed the functioning of nature so that the return to nature must now assume the character of a command? Or does the functioning of nature also prevail within culture, making that command essentially meaningless? Sade adopts here a position of ambiguity, which is well illustrated by his double concept of right and law. On the one hand, law aims at the general good as opposed to the merely individual one; therefore, it must enforce the renunciation of total gratification of desires, whereby the more or less covert war between the individual and the society—originally established for his

2367 *op. cit.*, IV = OC, IX, 325.
2368 *loc. cit.*, 172; cf. the good analysis by Baruzzi, *Mensch und Maschine*, 130 f.
2369 *loc. cit.*, 180; *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, V = OC, III, 515.

protection—begins.[2370] Law in this sense is the work of cunning, employed by the weak to secure their survival against the law of nature;[2371] "humanity" arises from the "fear" and "selfishness" of the weaker, says Sade,[2372] and the stronger only consents because he knows he is capable of transgressing the agreed law.[2373] On the other hand, law does not take account of the weaker but directly protects the interests of the stronger;[2374] Sade, referencing Hobbes' nominalist concept of law,[2375] shows a remarkably clear understanding of law's class function, its entanglement with property relations, etc.[2376] Thus, law here does not serve a fictitious general welfare but appears as the continuation of nature in culture—or as confirmation that nature dictates the rules even when one pretends to have overcome it. If this is the case, the demand for a return to nature can logically only be justified through the moral argument that one should dispense with the hypocrisy and lies associated with society and law. Yet here Nietzsche's question is apt: why give preference to truth rather than to lies if one has already left behind good and evil? Sade is at least aware that unrestricted gratification of desires by all would lead to the dissolution of society and a return to the forests;[2377] he can scarcely imagine an extremely libertine and lasting society in concrete terms, despite his provocative and strongly ironic call to establish such a society—[2378]and therefore he also has his libertines exercise their inventive gifts only in private circles. Their usually high cultural level is meant to remind us that perfect, intellectual, and need-free crime is only possible within culture. A return to raw nature would ultimately impair the quality and consciousness—and thus the pleasure itself—of crime. From this perspective, the significance of the demand for a return to nature, and thus also the logical contradiction in Sade, can be

2370 *Juliette* IV = OC, IX, 134 f.
2371 *op. cit.*, I = OC, VIII, 173 f.
2372 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, VII = OC, III, 543.
2373 *Juliette* I = OC, VIII, 118.
2374 *loc. cit.*, 117 ff.
2375 *Nouvelle Justine* XIII = OC, VII, 110.
2376 A good summary of Sade's "political diagnosis" can be found in Gorer, *Sade*, 137 ff.
2377 *Juliette* VI = OC, IX, 513.
2378 *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, V = OC, III, 478 ff.

relativized. One could venture the interpretation that his "should" is essentially only the dramatized, extremely sharpened form of his conception of "is": the command to commit crime actually seeks to underline the fact that the (total) annihilation of humanity would be completely indifferent to nature—[2379]which would confirm the ontological view of its operation and its meaninglessness. Sade falls into the logical difficulty that the establishment of a "should"—even that of a command to destroy—must entail for any nihilist precisely through his attempt to simply invert normativist concepts. The demand for a return to nature is fundamentally only a takeover and reversal of Rousseauism. By adopting the constructs of the normativists but reversing their signs, he runs the same risk as the normativists themselves: polemical consistency outstrips logical consistency even in his case. Sade nevertheless knows the way out of this dilemma: it lies in sober reconciliation with the meaninglessness of the world and with death,[2380] where neither virtue is rejected nor crime condemned, but rather the motto is: "*sois homme, sois humain, sans crainte et sans espérance*".[2381] If this motif is somewhat neglected in his work, it is due to the pathetic intensification of the battle against theism and normativism in general, which inevitably entangled him in logical difficulties. In this respect, however, La Mettrie is the superior—or at least more consistent—nihilistic thinker. Yet Sade's emphasis and boldness remain unique.

4. The Logical Dead End of Moralistic Materialism

From the described logical harmony of materialist ontology and value-nihilism, the difficulty of reconciling that ontology with normativist positions emerges negatively but clearly. It was evidently neither by accident nor misunderstanding that the nihilists so emphatically endorsed materialism; materialists who did not wish to

2379 *Juliette*, IV = OC, IX, 171.
2380 *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond* = OC, XIV, 62 f. Cf. the remarks of Ivker, *Sade and Restif*, 210 ff.
2381 *loc. cit.*, 64.

be nihilists thus had either to water down their materialism, to accept an open logical contradiction—or both. This becomes apparent, in varying forms and combinations, with Helvétius, Holbach, and Diderot. In the case of the first-named, the ambiguity can be seen at first glance by comparing him with La Mettrie. Although Helvétius judges human nature and the character of morality as a social phenomenon very similarly to La Mettrie, he nevertheless—unlike the latter—wishes not only to absolutize the power of education but also to assign it morally emancipatory tasks. Whereas La Mettrie sees in religion and superstition reliable instruments of discipline and thus supporters of social coexistence, Helvétius insists on the elimination of religious values from moral education—not merely because he believes these to be technically inadequate for maintaining social life, but rather because of an antitheological normative stance. The elimination of theology is the true goal of his strict distinction between what is *theologiquement* and what is *politiquement* good and moral—[2382] and not, as in Machiavelli and Hobbes, concern for the subjugation of theology to politics or its use for sociopolitical purposes. It is precisely the reformist-normative intention that drives Helvétius to the thesis of the omnipotence of education,[2383] even at the cost of the theoretically reckless denial of any significance of natural predispositions for the educational process.[2384] For the epistemological foundation of that thesis, Helvétius famously draws on Condillac and, by reducing judgment to sensation—or rather, identifying the two—[2385] he believes that the purposeful stimulation of the mind by appropriate sensations within the framework of education would suffice to produce the desired moral disposition. After all, he claims, intellectual capacities are the same in all humans; only education differentiates and shapes them.[2386]

The belief in the omnipotence of education goes hand in hand with the nominalist conviction that morality as such is a convention—thus, something made. Yet this very conviction paradoxically cannot do without the assumption of a constant human nature: Hobbes and

2382 *Esprit* II, 15 = OC, II, 242.
2383 *Homme*, X, 1 = OC, XII, 71, 75.
2384 Baumgarten, *Helvétius*, 14 f.
2385 *Esprit* I, 1 = OC, I, 210 ff.
2386 *Homme* II, 1 = OC, VII, 156 ff.

La Mettrie, after all, had not without reason developed their nominalist theories of morality in view of a specific anthropology. Helvétius proceeds in the same (tacit) manner, thereby unintentionally driving a wedge between his normativistically inspired view of the omnipotence of education—which rests on the *tabula rasa* theory—and his skeptical-relativist theory of morality, which is tied to the notion of an unchanging human nature. The consequences of this will soon become clear. Helvétius must nonetheless hold both positions simultaneously, because both contain the coveted thesis of the makeability of morality —though he fails to notice that in the former case the makeability of the normative is meant, while in the latter it is only that of the empirical—and that makeability in the normative sense may be subject to entirely different laws than that in the empirical. The thesis about the conventional or makeable character of morality is linked with a fixed anthropology insofar as morality here appears as a function of self-love. For Helvétius too, morality is the product of an *orgueil éclairé*, since it lives from the purposeful steering of self-love through social recognition and reward.[2387] Yet if the existence and effect of this basic drive imply that morality or education must exist, it remains entirely open what is to be regarded as moral; depending on time and place—i.e., depending on the constellation in which the basic drive is partly satisfied and partly inhibited—morality takes on a different concrete content, as Helvétius himself emphasizes.[2388] The relativity of the content of morality (thus also of education, which is already relative because it depends on the respective form of government)[2389] stems not least—paradoxical as it may sound—from the existence of essentially unchanging basic drives that produce morality as such, but are satisfied or inhibited differently each time. Education, then, can at most assume the steering of these basic drives; it does not alter their existence and general effectiveness. It cannot be omnipotent, as long as morality comes into being as Helvétius describes. Hence La Mettrie was consistent when he pointed to the impotence of education in view of such an origin of morality.

Helvétius attempts to address this difficulty by assuring that

2387 *Esprit*, II, 5 = OC, II, 64 f.

2388 *Esprit* II, 13, 18–20 = OC II, 185 ff., 280 f. and III, 1 ff.; *Homme* II, 18 = OC, VIII, 78 ff. (Hume is mentioned here as a relativist).

2389 *Esprit* IV, 17 = OC, VI, 181; *Homme* X, 9 = OC, XII, 125 ff.

man is neither good nor evil, but rather infinitely plastic.[2390] By nature, he feels only pleasure and pain; selfish drives would arise only within society.[2391] Leaving aside the inevitable vagueness of any distinction between natural and social man, as well as its rather academic character (since we do after all live in society), it must be objected to Helvétius' classification of drives that pleasure and pain originally relate to the needs of self-preservation, which is why their social processing also results in selfish passions and not something else. Helvétius himself admits that *amour-propre* is innate, while simultaneously adding that from it both good and evil may spring.[2392] However, other formulations are somewhat differently nuanced, in which, for example, vain pride, though *condamnable*, is nevertheless described as socially *nécessaire et inhérent à la nature humaine.*[2393] Helvétius indeed—always with an eye to his normative-educational goal—does not want to go as far as the moralists before him, above all the admired La Rochefoucauld,[2394] in their bleak depiction of the human psyche,[2395] yet on the other hand, he himself offers, for example, a now-famous analysis of friendship,[2396] which certainly cannot be interpreted as a hymn to man's ability for selfless devotion even in his most intimate relations. The frequent references to Hobbes are characteristic of this anthropological tendency. Man's sociability is not innate; this view of Hobbes is criticized by those who tell the romance of the human soul and admired by those who want to write its history.[2397]

Thus, the fact remains unchallenged that man is originally selfish and therefore at least potentially dangerous to his fellow man. Helvétius could have taken refuge behind the Enlightenment

2390 *Homme* V, 3 = OC, IX, 137 f.
2391 *Esprit* III, 9 = OC, IV, 37 f.
2392 *op. cit.* I, 4 = OC, I, 269.
2393 *op. cit.* II, 7 = OC, II, 100; cf. II, 4 = OC, II, 41 f.
2394 On La Mettrie's, Mandeville's, and La Rochefoucauld's influence on Helvétius, see Cumming, *Helvétius*, 65 ff.
2395 *Esprit* II, 5 = OC, II, 65 note.
2396 *op. cit.* III, 14 = OC, IV, 97 ff.
2397 *Homme* II, 8 = OC, VII, 225 note. Cf. the passages on the state of nature and the emergence of justice, which also confirm Hobbes' influence (IV, 8–9 and V, 4 = OC, VIII, 253 ff. and IX, 151 ff.).

commonplace and claimed that morality would arise from the free play of self-love with the welcome assistance of education.[2398] He does not do so precisely because, fundamentally, he thinks far more pessimistically about (the actual state of) man. Therefore, the proposed solution—namely, a kind of creation of man *ex nihilo* by means of an all-powerful education—turns out much more drastic. The pessimism relates to the actual, the optimism to the possible, so that Helvétius does not feel himself in contradiction, even though, in order to pave the way for the possible, he had to more or less deny the solid existential foundations of the actual, despite his dark portrayal of it. Be that as it may: had he not recognized the far-reaching effects of self-love in all their danger, his educational intention or method would not have been so radical either. When he reproaches Rousseau for, despite all his glorification of education, in fact abolishing it by identifying it with the free course of nature,[2399] he makes it clear that his own trust in nature is much weaker. His insight into the mechanisms of self-love reveals itself in all its depth where he seeks to grasp its consequences for the character of individual and social modes of thought. "L'intérêt préside à tous nos jugements",[2400] he states, and quotes—without specifying the source—Hobbes' remark that even mathematical truths would be disputed if they jeopardized tangible interests.[2401] Human thinking is not originally condemned to error, but errors become unavoidable because of its perspectival character.[2402] The perspectival way of thinking, however, can hardly be overcome in practice, since within society one must continuously rationalize one's own passions, so that finally "l'intérêt personnel est, dans chaque société, l'unique appréciateur du mérite des choses et des personnes"—[2403]and passions, in turn, cannot be renounced because they are the motor of all life; moreover, they could all be reduced to self-love, which is equally strong in all men.[2404] Passions are in morality what motion is

2398 See above, Chapter VI, Section 3c.
2399 *Homme* V, 5 = OC, IX, 159 ff.
2400 *Esprit* II, 1 = OC, II, 7.
2401 *Homme* IX, 15 = OC, XI, 208 (cf. II, 16 = OC, VIII, 53 f.).
2402 *Esprit* I, 2 = OC, I, 218 ff.
2403 *op. cit.* II, 7 = OC, II, 104.
2404 *Homme* IV, 4 and 23 = OC, VIII, 231 and IX, 67 f.

in physics;[2405] "l'activité de l'esprit dépend de l'activité des passions";[2406] |si elles nous égarent, elles seules nous donnent la force nécessaire pour marcher".[2407] The dependence of the intellect on psychic sensibility, which results in its relative or perspectival character, is furthermore for Helvétius only part of its broader dependence on the biological structure of man in general. Had we hooves instead of hands, he says, we would be wild beasts—[2408]a more radical intensification of Enlightenment anti-intellectualism in the service of relativism can hardly be imagined.

The insoluble connection between the selfish perspectivism of thought and the biopsychic constitution of man, as depicted by Helvétius, can hardly be reconciled with his thesis of the omnipotence of education, which must presuppose not only the infinite plasticity of the psyche but also the capacity to (at least partially) overcome that perspectivism. Helvétius does claim that error can arise from ignorance,[2409] but he himself shows the greatest distrust towards the human willingness to fill gaps in their own knowledge at the expense of their own interests. If ignorance can be a source of error, repression can in turn be a source of ignorance. And if selfish perspectivism—whether conscious or not—is such a significant cause of ignorance, then one cannot reasonably expect it to be tamed through new (non-optional, non-academic) knowledge and insights. In truth, no other consistent solution remains for Helvétius than that of an educational dictatorship, for which he takes an important ideological step by introducing the distinction between "true"and "apparent" interest,[2410] while it is taken for granted who shall judge which is which: the "rational" legislator. The normative concept of education is therefore activist and rather tailored to the educator. But Helvétius also employs another concept of education that could be applied to any previous society, since it—value-free—means the shaping of human behavior and judgment through the totality of life circumstances that affect

2405 *Esprit* III, 6 = OC, III, 263.
2406 *op. cit.* III, 8 = OC, IV, 30.
2407 *op. cit.* I, 2 = OC, I, 223.
2408 *op. cit.* I, 1 = OC, I, 191.
2409 *op. cit.* I, 3 = OC, I, 224 f.
2410 On the contradiction between the two concepts of interest, see the remarks by Plechanow, *Beiträge*, 133 ff.

feeling. That education in this sense has always been omnipotent, Helvétius knows—[2411]only to conclude that future education, now entrusted with normative tasks, must also be omnipotent. This should not suggest that Helvétius thought in a totalitarian sense in the modern meaning of the word—on the contrary, he did not.[2412] Yet we must keep this extreme possibility of his educational ideal in mind, precisely to show that even its realization would by no means guarantee the fulfillment of education's normative aims. For, as Marx already asked: who will educate the educators? Why should the engineer of men escape the vicious circle of perspectival thinking and, as legislator, be able to establish a society that does not serve some particular interest at the expense of others? Even his subjectively honest effort for the common good would not eo ipso prevent the objective implementation of particular interests, precisely because the rationalization of unconscious motives, so subtly described by Helvétius ("nous ignorons souvent nous-mêmes les motifs qui nous déterminent")[2413], would function no differently for him than for his subjects. Viewed externally, the educator faces the same difficulties as the educated—and the difficulties of both lie in Helvétius' ambiguity. This ambiguity also reveals itself when he gives two different definitions of justice. In an empirical-genetic sense, justice as a *modus vivendi* in society is solely the effect of "sensibilité physique" (pleasure–pain) and "intérêt personnel".[2414] In a normative sense, however, justice is supposed to consist in the willingness to (partially) renounce misleading narrow personal interests in favor of the "bien public".[2415] Helvétius, who—as mentioned—ignores the difference between the machinability of the empirical and that of the normative, is also unaware that the transition from one concept of justice to the other, and thus from the empirical to the normative concept of education, cannot be achieved without revising his epistemological starting point. If sensation and judgment are identical, then the mind can recognize

2411 *Esprit* IV, 17 = OC, VI, 181 ff.

2412 His distrust of the absolutist state is described by Cumming, *Helvétius*, 228 ff. Cf., however, his remarks on the preeminent role of education in the mindset and politics of modern totalitarianism, 172 ff.

2413 *Esprit* II, 2 = OC, II, 14.

2414 *op. cit.* III, 4 = OC, III, 218.

2415 *op. cit.* II, 6 = OC, II, 73 f.

only what is real, not what is possible. The individual, whether legislator or subject, can scarcely know what the common good is if it is not already realized; if it is not, then he must confuse the idea of the common good, produced through the comparing operations of the faculty of judgment, with his own feeling or interest—that is, interpret it according to them. Without the anticipatory activity of an autonomous intellect, education can only transmit what empirically exists, but not change it; it remains omnipotent only in its empirical sense. It was therefore no accident that Helvétius' Enlightenment critics, Diderot no less than Rousseau, saw the greatest danger for the achievement of the very normative goals he had set himself in the weakness of the intellect.

The theoretical embarrassment of Helvétius ultimately shows itself in his diagnosis of social evil and in his reform proposals. Here he reverses the order of being and consciousness, or of sensation and judgment, that he himself otherwise considers correct, and instead places the subjective factor—the subjective will, whose freedom he, incidentally, recognizes only in Hobbes' nominalistic sense—[2416] at the center. Just as the cause of evil lies in the bad intentions and selfish behavior of the rulers, so too is salvation sought in the enlightenment of human reason.[2417] In other words, the logical impossibility of advancing further in a normative direction with purely materialistic means forces the acceptance of an active and decision-capable will and understanding. On the one hand, the materialists deny innate ideas and trace thought back to physical and social being; on the other hand, however, they emphasize the paramount role of ideas—whether in the form of superstition or reason—in history.[2418] In order to remain politically and normatively active, they must accept a contradiction, and if they are unaware of it, then only because polemical consistency outweighs logical consistency: both their materialism and their scale of values are directed against theology, even though they contradict one another. In Holbach this contradiction becomes even more evident than in Helvétius and assumes its almost classical form. The dissolution of intellect and of free will—which in Helvétius took place within a primarily epistemological framework and thus could be

2416 *op. cit.* I, 4 = OC, I, 276 f.
2417 *op. cit.* II, 23, 24 = OC, III, 100 f., 113.
2418 Plechanow, *Monistische Geschichtsauffassung*, 18 ff., *Beiträge* 67 ff.

passed off as a respectable Lockeanism (especially since Helvétius, like Locke, affirmed the unknowability of the thing-in-itself or of matter, etc.)—now appears in Holbach against an impressive ontological backdrop and thus gains particular weight. By systematically presenting the materialist-determinist conception of being, Holbach himself provides an externally visible standard for judging the logical coherence of his moral philosophy—or more precisely: of the transition from his philosophy of nature to his philosophy of morals; for Holbach indeed seeks to achieve this transition, i.e., he wants to found his moral philosophy upon his ontology and thereby render it irrefutable.[2419]

Unlike La Mettrie, Holbach therefore considers *true* morality as a continuation, not a denial, of nature. All the more striking, then, is the fact that he—this time in agreement with La Mettrie—emphatically asserts the moral colorlessness of nature. In rejecting any personification of nature,[2420] he conceives of it strictly causally and denies the existence of good and evil within it.[2421] Given the ontological monopoly of nature, man too must be entirely nature, an *être purement physique*—and that in the aforementioned value-free sense—so that the distinction between *homme moral* and *homme physique* disappears.[2422] From this value-free conception of nature, Holbach can also conclude that man is by nature neither good nor evil;[2423] no ideas are innate to him, and thus no moral ideas either.[2424] Holbach believes that through this he can liberate man from original sin; but because he eliminates the normative aspect of nature—that is, both evil and good—solely through an all-encompassing causality, that liberation of man must amount to his complete submission to that very causality. The paradox arises that Holbach, in order to pave the way for a new moral creation *ex nihilo*, must first eliminate normativity and free will *a limine*. Man is not free at any moment of his life, he says;[2425] even the freedom of choice does not mean freedom of will, since one

2419 *Système de la Nature* I, 211; cf. *Morale Universelle* I, 1.
2420 *Système de la Nature* I, 76 f.
2421 *loc. cit.* 71.
2422 *loc. cit.* 67.
2423 *loc. cit.* 219.
2424 *loc. cit.* 237 f.
2425 *loc. cit.* 276.

can indeed choose one's goals, but not determine one's motives.[2426] In accordance with his naturalistic principles, Holbach traces human unfreedom back to man's physical constitution. The "*qualités morales... sont dues à des causes matérielles*";[2427] "*notre organisation ne dépend point de nous, nos idées nous viennent involontairement... nous sommes bien ou mal, heureux ou malheureux, sages ou insensés, raisonnables ou déraisonnables, sans que notre volonté entre pour rien dans ces différens états*".[2428] Since nature is unified in its laws but not in its products—as the manifoldness of the world attests—the case of two entirely similar human constitutions, and thus also of two entirely identical ways of thinking, must be excluded.[2429] The situation in the realm of ideas and opinions must seem even more confused when one considers that one and the same cause affects the same individual in different ways at different times, and that therefore all individuals are constantly changing in different directions.[2430]

The extreme perspectivism thus emerges here directly from the rigor and consistency of the concept of causality. Holbach does not wish to deny this connection; however, he believes himself capable of drafting a universal morality based on perspectives and causalities supposedly common to all men.[2431] The drive for self-preservation and the pursuit of happiness form the two pillars of the new morality, as they fix the shared perspective of all men. But even if this is granted—the individuals can agree only that there *must* be a morality, not eo ipso on what should count as moral. In other words, the universal human perspective produces only the *fact* of morality; the decisive *content* remains left to each person's individual perspective—and Holbach himself had shown how greatly one perspective must differ from another and how unstable each must be in itself. A broadening or stabilization of personal perspective with regard to that of one's fellow man, that is, with regard to the common good, is certainly in Holbach's spirit; but he cannot accept it without partially giving up the unfreedom of the will and the dependence of thought on biological

2426 *loc. cit.* 269.
2427 *loc. cit.* 196, cf. 191.
2428 *loc. cit.* 259.
2429 *loc. cit.* 188 f., 252 ff.
2430 *loc. cit.* 387.
2431 *loc. cit.* 282.

constitution. In fact, precisely in his analysis of the concept of virtue, the role of reflection is particularly emphasized.[2432] Self-love, in itself, is merely the counterpart of blind physical forces (such as attraction or inertia) in man-as-nature;[2433] it is not even capable of sacrificing short-term pleasure for long-term gain. Holbach must therefore smuggle in reason all the more, as he—believing himself in possession of the only effective moral-philosophical recipe—wishes to establish a morality that is not a convention but valid always and everywhere.[2434] Tellingly, he points to the differing physical constitutions of men only when explaining the variety of superstitious beliefs;[2435] but when it comes to the variety of moral systems, which would somewhat undermine his dream of One eternal morality, he remains silent, and accordingly he remains among the least historically-minded of the prominent Enlightenment thinkers. This is due not only to his preference for materialist ontology but also—paradoxically—equally to his peculiar ahistorical normativism, which aims to soften or eliminate the fatalistic consequences of that ontology. This normativism also inspires his relentless critique of religion and his thesis that the misrecognition or non-observance of nature is to blame for human suffering.[2436] Yet according to his strict causal conception of nature, a deviation from nature would be just as impossible as anger against its supposed authors would be baseless. In order to find culprits, Holbach breaks the iron ring of natural law—and he does the same in order to nourish hope. Following the same thread, he falls into the same logical contradiction as Helvetius, by removing the "rational legislator" from the vicious circle of determinism and expecting great things from him.[2437] The more his argumentation dares to inspire his

2432 *Morale Universelle* I, 73 f.
2433 *Système de la Nature* I, 115.
2434 *op. cit.* I, 204; II, 278.
2435 *op. cit.* I, 255.
2436 *loc. cit.* 9.
2437 *Morale Universelle* II, 31 ff. The same logical contradiction in Helvétius' and Holbach's thought is noted by Lough (*Helvétius and Holbach*, 372, 383), who also outlines the largely similar attitude of both thinkers toward ontological, anthropological, epistemological, and political questions.
Ladd emphasizes the commonality of their political views and also points to their similar epistemological and anthropological assumptions (*Helvétius and d'Holbach*, 222 f.). Cf. Wolgin, *Gesellschaftstheorien*, 106 ff., 138 ff.

optimism, the more unbridgeable the gulf between *morale universelle* and the causal conditioning of man becomes.[2438]

It is hardly imaginable how strong the desire to dispel the suspicion of nihilism must have been, such that such inconsistencies were simply overlooked. Understandably, this desire grew stronger every time an Enlightenment thinker handed welcome arguments to the theologians. They had already found, in La Mettrie, everything openly stated that they had always portrayed as the necessary consequences of the new ideas.[2439] The early warning was rightly understood to mean that theology could not possibly be defeated as long as Enlightenment remained under the banner of anarchic amoralism. The extraordinary vehemence with which La Mettrie was attacked by leading Enlighteners shows just how sensitive this point really was. Even materialists used expressions against him that hardly fell short of the theologians in sharpness—for they needed an alibi most bitterly. According to Holbach, La Mettrie argued in moral philosophy "comme un vrai frenetique",[2440] while Diderot denounced

2438 Plechanow, *Beiträge*, 42. Similarly, Naumann, 122 ff., 113 f. Naumann summarizes the Marxist critique of the "mechanicist" Holbach by saying he considers only the physical, not the historical and praxis-related aspect of consciousness formation. On the other hand, Naumann has no objection to the "theory of the all-encompassing determination of man by objective laws." Should then the desired inclusion of praxis simply mean supplementing the "causes physiques" with "causes morales"? Montesquieu's example has already shown us that this is insufficient to avoid determinism (see above, Chapter VI, Section 4d). The Marxist critique of the so-called mechanicists serves more to demonstrate the superiority of "dialectical" materialism than to solve the logical problem—more precisely: the assumption of that superiority is supposed to *be* the solution, which is a classic petitio principii.
Mensching also points out the basic contradiction in Holbach's thinking (*Totalität und Autonomie*, 81 ff.), but believes it can still be resolved on a materialist basis. He offers no such solution, instead citing the emancipatory statements of the materialists (only La Mettrie is considered incorrigible, 199). The point, however, is not whether such statements are made, but whether they can be logically reconciled with materialist ontology. Confusing intentions with achievements is unacceptable here. Mensching's account of Diderot (94 ff.) is too selective and superficial to count as evidence of a successful synthesis of materialism and ethics.
2439 Falvey, *Introduction*, 87 ff.; Vartanian, *Homme Machine*, 252 ff.
2440 *Système de la Nature* II, 366 note.

his “sophismes grossiers, mais dangereux,” his “chaos de raison et d'extravagance,” etc., at length and with violence.[2441] Such emphatic distancing obviously did not suffice, especially since theologians were quite willing and able to see through the internal contradictions of Holbach’s system.[2442] All this seemed, at least temporarily, to justify Voltaire’s strategic approach. From the outset, he had opposed materialistic tendencies, and he had coupled his criticism of La Mettrie’s ontology[2443] with a clear rejection of value-nihilism. “Il y a une grande difference entre combattre les superstitions des hommes, et rompre les liens de la societe et les chaines de la vertu,” he wrote on January 27, 1752,[2444] and around the same time he indirectly polemicized against La Mettrie’s *Anti-Seneca* in his *Poeme sur la loi naturelle.*[2445] Voltaire's stance toward the materialists was shaped not only by principle but at least as much by tactical considerations. He wished to avoid “une guerre civile entre les incredules” at all costs,[2446] and was thus ready to make concessions; nonetheless, his relations with the circle around Diderot and Holbach, especially after d'Alembert's withdrawal from the *Encyclopédie*, worsened, particularly because metaphysical differences were closely linked to political ones: even from his loyal d'Alembert, Voltaire had to endure the reproach that he maintained overly close ties with the “grands”.[2447] Voltaire responded by continuing to keep his distance from Diderot’s materialism[2448] and by interpreting Holbach’s attack on Christianity as a sign of anarchist political sentiment.[2449] Shortly after the appearance of Holbach’s main work, he wrote: “ce maudit Systeme de la Nature a fait un mal irreparable”.[2450] He commented in the same spirit on

2441 *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron*, OC, III, 217.
2442 Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers*, 189 ff., 215 f.; Crocker, *Age of Crisis*, 28.
2443 Perkins, *Voltaire and La Mettrie*, 105 f., 109.
2444 Letter to Richelieu, OC, XXXVII, 363.
2445 Crowley, *Voltaire’s Poème*, 186.
2446 Letter to d'Alembert, 27 July 1770 = OC, XLVII, 153.
2447 Pappas, *Voltaire et la guerre civile philosophique*, esp. 527 ff.; more extensively in *Voltaire and d’Alembert*, esp. 20 ff., 81 ff.
2448 Torrey, *Voltaire’s Reaction to Diderot*, 1127 ff.
2449 Letter to Mme de Saint-Julien, 15 December 1766 = OC, XLIV, 534 f.
2450 Shortly after the publication of Holbach’s main work he wrote: "ce maudit *Système de la Nature* a fait un mal irréparable" — Letter to Grimm, 10 October 1770 = OC, XLVII, 219, cf. 210 (Letter to Chabanon, 28 September

Helvetius' posthumous work *De l'Homme*.[2451] The name of Helvetius evoked not only fears for the future but also painful memories of the past, and not only for Voltaire. The uproar caused by *De l'Esprit* in 1758–1759 had indirectly contributed to the banning of the *Encyclopédie*, since the theological opponents of the Enlighteners did not fail to throw everything into the same pot.[2452] Even more painful than direct repression was perhaps the popularity that the anti-Enlightenment arguments gained at that time, not least through the success of Palissot's comedy *Les Philosophes*, which was written during the Helvetius controversy and directly attacked him.[2453] In its coarseness, Palissot's play nonetheless hit the most sensitive nerve of the Enlighteners—and also the seed: that the moral relativism based on sensualist principles could logically and popularly only be interpreted to mean that everything is permitted, provided it is in the interest of the individual.[2454]

The nourishment that Helvetius gave to the suspicion of nihilism—with such tangible consequences—may explain why he became an "unpopular martyr"[2455] among the Enlighteners. Despite theoretical and political differences with Voltaire (which, moreover, were not articulated publicly out of deference to the patriarch), the materialists had to concede to him at least on the question of the tactical advantages of normativism—regardless of its logical and substantive justification, which was tied more to basic orientation than to tactics—as the vehemence of their polemic against La Mettrie attests. Structurally, it remains crucial that, just as nihilism rooted itself in the materialist radicalization of the rehabilitation of sensibility, so too every refutation of it necessarily required at least a partial return to the firmer moral leadership of reason. Without being fully aware of it, Helvetius and Holbach both did just that, as they reversed their ontological sequence of material being and consciousness and placed

1770).

2451 Letter to d'Alembert, 16 June 1773 = OC, XLVIII, 399.

2452 Smith, *Helvétius*, 150 ff. On the events surrounding the controversy over Helvétius' book and related polemical pamphlets, ibid., 11–91. Cf. Keim, *Helvétius*, 319–423.

2453 Freud, *Palissot et les Philosophes*, esp. 111 ff., 140 f.

2454 *Les Philosophes*, II, 1, esp. vv. 441 ff. = p. 22 ff.

2455 Smith, *Helvétius*, 157 ff.

their hopes in the enlightened legislator or educator. Yet this return becomes a truly symbolic act when it happens openly and with a thinker as sensitive to large contexts as Diderot—and indeed under the influence of Rousseau, the fierce enemy of materialism. With the deterministic implications of sensualist epistemology in view, Rousseau defended free will—and thus the possibility of morality—against Helvetius, insisting on the distinction between *sentir* and *juger* as well as on the self-activity of the latter.[2456] Now when Diderot says that Rousseau's principles are false but his conclusions right, whereas for Helvetius the exact opposite is true,[2457] he captures his own dilemma vividly, even though he only sketches the synthesis he wished—or had already—attempted. For it is questionable whether Rousseau's conclusions would have been possible without his dualistic principle, or whether his sharp distinction between *sentir* and *juger* was itself a principle or a conclusion. Nevertheless, Diderot, no less than Rousseau (even if less emphatically), denies the identification of *sentir* and *juger*, and goes even a step further when he emphasizes "la distinction du physique et du moral," which he declares to be "aussi solide que celle d'animal qui sent et d'animal qui raisonne".[2458] He does not, however, question the supremacy of nature, yet he explicitly wishes this time to incorporate *raison* as a priority into human nature and sees in it the specific difference between man and animal.[2459] His thesis that *sensibilité physique* is the precondition, not the goal or motive of actions,[2460] aims at relieving reason from the pressure of the drives. If self-love is no longer the sole motive for action,[2461] then space is freed for altruistic and moral tendencies within the human psyche, and thus for an innate sense of justice that would precede and ground positive legislation.[2462]

Following this natural law principle, Diderot questions the

2456 See the detailed text comparison by Schinz, *La Profession de foi ... et le livre De l'Esprit*, 242 ff.; cf. the additions and objections by Masson, *Rousseau contre Helvétius*, 104 ff., 117 ff.
2457 *Réfutation*, OC, II, 316.
2458 *loc. cit.*, 303.
2459 *loc. cit.*, 312, 323.
2460 *loc. cit.*, 304 f.
2461 *loc. cit.*, 304.
2462 *loc. cit.*, 355, 388, 396.

omnipotence of education and relativizes the influence of environment on character.[2463] For he knows that the thesis of all-powerful education and that of the arbitrary malleability of morality go together. Holbach also opposed Helvetius on this point,[2464] and he intended not only to reaffirm the ontological inviolability of nature, but also to preserve those natural predispositions in man that were meant to support the *morale universelle*. In other words, Holbach defended the continuity of nature and morality against their nihilistic opposition—a position that Helvetius' stance had suggested. Diderot does the same. For him, rejecting the omnipotence of education has an additional advantage: the emphasis on the (largely) "causes purement physiques"[2465] of intellectual gifts gives him the feeling of remaining true to his materialist foundations—thus not having to abandon them even as he champions reason and natural law in the same text. However, Diderot presented these two positions in two different contexts, each directed against two logically heterogeneous aspects of Helvetius' thought. Whether they are actually reconcilable remains problematic; merely taking sides in favor of both does not resolve the issue—it only exposes it. Diderot believes himself to be on firm theoretical ground by including reason within human nature or matter by definition, assuming its rooting in the biological constitution of the human species.[2466] Yet he hardly considers the dependence of the reason of individuals on their own biological structure. Diderot makes the biological constitution or reason of the species the basis for his natural law reflections, while using the biological constitution or reason of the individual as the main argument against the omnipotence of education —without considering that the contents of individual reason might, precisely because of their biological conditioning, diverge so much that the natural law suggested by collective reason would lose any substantive binding force. From the mere *that* does not follow the *what*; thus relativism is still not overcome. The importance of this point becomes clear from the fact that Diderot himself, only a few years earlier, had justified his skepticism about a universally valid morality by pointing to the particular biological constitution of each individual.

2463 *loc. cit.*, 356, 369.
2464 *Morale Universelle* I, 11 note; III, 53 ff.
2465 *Réfutation*, OC, II, 369, 334 ff., 405 f.
2466 *loc. cit.*, 312, 323.

If we wish to ground morality in the criterion of the biological constitution of the species, he had argued then, we must immediately subdivide this universal human morality into multiple moralities, in accordance with the biological heterogeneity of individuals and groups.[2467]

In general, Diderot tries to escape Helvetius' sensualist determinism by inserting a multitude of new factors into the causal chain, thereby making it longer and more flexible; although *sentir* (to feel) remains the ultimate authority for him as well, he posits several *motifs immédiats* between it and *agir* (to act).[2468] Nevertheless, the ambiguity persists—this time on a higher level. Diderot merely postpones answering the fundamental question concerning the relationship between *sentir* and *juger* (to judge) when he says that the latter has nothing to do with the senses but only with the brain:[2469] for how does the faculty of judgment relate to the constitution of the brain, and to what extent can its spontaneity assert itself against material factors? Playing the brain off against the senses yields very little theoretical gain regarding this central aporia. Thus, the assumption must also appear misleading that Diderot successfully solves the problem of moral philosophy—or refutes nihilism—on the basis of a highly developed, differentiated materialism.[2470] It is an optical illusion to believe that the watering down of Diderot's materialism under the pressure of the suspicion of nihilism represents a perfection of his materialism that enables the solution of the value problem. A long struggle within Diderot's thought finds its weary and ultimately only provisional conclusion in this watering down of his materialism—though it must not be seen as an outright renunciation of it—for the final word was never spoken.

This inner struggle had already begun with Diderot's transition from deism to atheism, when the harmony of God, world, and man that had hovered before the admirer of Shaftesbury under the sign of

2467 *Salon de 1767*, OC, XI, 124.

2468 *Réfutation*, OC, II, 302.

2469 *loc. cit.*, 318.

2470 So betrachtet Perkins den angeblich dynamischen Charakter von Diderots Materialismus gegenüber dem angeblichen Mechanizismus La Mettries als Grund für den Unterschied der moralphilosophischen Einstellung beider Denker (*Diderot et La Mettrie*, 70 ff., 81 f.).

tout est bien[2471] fell apart in light of the elementary recognition of the power of evil in the world.[2472] Even the God of Diderot the deist had had scarcely any points of contact with the "inhuman" God of established Christianity; yet the paralyzing effect of unrestrained optimism in polemics against theology and Church[2473] led to its abandonment. The pessimism Diderot marshals against Christianity thus goes hand in hand with the complete subjugation of man to natural causality, that is, with a deterministic perspective, which he already affirms in 1756: "*le mot liberté est un mot vide de sens*", hence there are objectively no truly praiseworthy or blameworthy actions.[2474] Thus Diderot's turn—this quintessentially anti-Christian thinker—[2475]must be explained through the intensification of polemic against Christianity. The new biology confirmed him in this turn but did not originally cause it.[2476] Nevertheless, his determinism assumes its sharpest contours in his engagement with biological and physiological questions,[2477] whereas in texts like the *Refutation* a retreat from pure materialist biologism becomes discernible.[2478] In the *Elements de Physiologie* he speaks plainly: "*il n'y a rien de libre dans les opérations intellectuelles*",[2479] that is, the connection and sequence of thoughts proceed as necessarily as causal processes among inanimate objects.[2480] Thus, there can be no talk of any spontaneity of the soul.[2481] By subsuming vice and virtue alike under the drive for happiness as equally possible modifications of it,[2482] the determinist Diderot is compelled to advocate a purely utilitarian morality, in

2471 Venturi, *Jeunesse de Diderot*, 83 ff., 116 ff., 144 ff.; Schlegel, *Shaftesbury and the French Deists*, 43 ff.
2472 Roger, *Déisme du jeune Diderot*, 243 f.
2473 See above, Chapter VI, Section 5.
2474 Letter to Landois, 29 June 1756 = OC, XIX, 435 f.
2475 Proust, *Diderot et l'Encyclopédie*, 295 ff.
2476 As Vartanian argues, *From Deist to Atheist*, 53 f., 55 f., 60 f.
2477 Mayer, *Diderot*, 284, 326 f.
2478 Roger, *Sciences de la vie*, 669 ff.
2479 IX, 379.
2480 *loc. cit.*, 372.
2481 *loc. cit.*, 377, 223 (cf. *Rêve d'Alembert*, OC, IX, 175 f.).
2482 *loc. cit.*, 352.

which right and wrong function as "pures affaires de convention".[2483] The ontological foundation of this moral philosophy is: in nature there is no good and evil, no beauty and ugliness as such, only necessity.[2484]

Diderot had rebelled against Christianity as a humanist and moralist. And the paradox of his situation—the same paradox that characterized the Enlightenment as a whole—was that in seeking an anti-Christian humanism he became a determinist. Yet the humanist in him continued to regard virtue as the highest thing in this world.[2485] Diderot knew, of course, that value nihilism had no chance against theology,[2486] yet morality was for him not merely a tactical necessity but a matter of the heart. Thus he could not reconcile himself to the idea that man was by nature evil or a mere plaything in the hands of necessity;[2487] rather, he believed that man's moral condition was shaped by education and legislation.[2488] glimmer of confidence in human reason shows through when Diderot regards ignorance as "*la mère de toutes nos erreurs*," thus affirming the role of enlightenment as emancipation from ignorance.[2489] Despite his sympathetic treatment of Hobbes' person and theories in the relevant article of the *Encyclopédie*,[2490] and despite his serious consideration of self-love as a motive for human action, he by no means wished to identify himself with the anthropology of the notorious Englishman.[2491] Nor was he willing to follow Hobbes' nominalist conception of justice without reservations; rather, with some terminological caveats, he preferred Grotius.[2492] On the other hand, he was able to so well comprehend—and to a certain extent make his own—the internal logic of the nihilistic position that he did not merely counter it with the traditional

2483 *Introduction aux grands Principes*, OC, II, 85 note, 78.
2484 *Encyclopédie*, Art. *Laideur* = OC, XV, 410, cf. letter to S. Volland, 31 July 1762 = Corr. IV, 84 f.
2485 Letter to N... from late 1757 = OC, XIX, 449.
2486 Letter to Voltaire, 29 September 1762 = OC, XIX, 464.
2487 Letter to S. Volland, 26 October 1760 = Corr., III, 195 f. (almost a year later he claims the opposite: letter to S. Volland, 28 September 1761 = Corr., III, 319 f.).
2488 Letter to S. Volland, 3 November 1760 = OC, XIX, 7.
2489 Letter to S. Volland, 22 September 1761 = Corr., III, 312 f.
2490 OC, XIV, 94 ff.
2491 Thielemann, *Diderot and Hobbes*, 229 ff.
2492 *Encyclopédie*, Art. *Juste* = OC, XV, 401 f.

natural-law platitudes, which for him were often problematic or just a refuge in necessity, by naive sovereign assertion. In the article "Droit Naturel" of the *Encyclopédie*, he therefore takes a different path and tries to defeat nihilism with its own weapons—seeking to achieve a harmonization between deterministic and normative views. What can one say or do against someone who, appealing to the unfreedom of his will, declares that he must harm others in his pursuit of happiness? Diderot's answer: the will of the individual is suspect, the general will is infallible, thus the former must yield to the latter—or else deserves to be annihilated without further ado.[2493] The general interest, in other words, has absolute priority over the particular; at bottom, it is a conflict of interests, in which, naturally, the interest of the stronger—namely that of the generality—must prevail. The stronger thereby becomes the representative of morality. Here, natural law no longer possesses any normative transcendence; it merely forms the (content-wise indeterminate) sum of what supports the general interest.[2494] La Mettrie had, in essence, said the same when he urged the criminal to recognize the necessity—even the rationality—of his eventual annihilation.[2495]

By abandoning the idea of natural law precisely at the moment he seeks to defend it, Diderot solemnly reveals his permanent oscillation between determinism and morality—or, as he himself says, between what his head approved and what his heart demanded.[2496] This oscillation was unavoidable; the contradiction, insurmountable. Diderot's greatness as a thinker must therefore not be sought in the realization of the impossible, but rather in the fact that he—unlike Rousseau, who had a talent for ignoring logical difficulties—was capable of recognizing them, and of fighting against them unceasingly and head-on.[2497] More than that: he could, if not logically resolve them, at least artistically master them—by objectifying them literarily, gaining distance from them, and thus achieving a kind of psychic relief through artistic creation.[2498] The first of these great objectifications was

2493 OC, XIV, 298 ff.
2494 Cf. Crocker, *Nature and Culture*, 56.
2495 See above, Section 3 of this chapter.
2496 Mornet, *Diderot*, 57.
2497 Becker, *The Dilemma of Diderot*, 63, 71.
2498 Fahre, *Introduction*, LXIII ff.

Le Neveu de Rameau, in which the protagonist espouses all the nihilistic positions we know. Yet it is not the abstract logical consistency of the arguments that reveals the truth about nihilism as Diderot's personal problem—it is the nature of their representative, in all his contradictions—and therein lies the artistic achievement. As a pure nihilist, Diderot would no longer be Diderot, but Rameau—and precisely for that reason he can, as Diderot, distance himself from Rameau—while still recognizing in him intellectual traits that Diderot himself had to attribute to his own inclination toward nihilism: a passion for truth and analytical power. Nevertheless, Diderot could not embody a nihilist in the figure of a Sadistic criminal, nor is Rameau such a figure. Rameau must appear cynical, because he acknowledges no noble motives—yet he can, because of his commitment to honesty, still leave the impression of a moral man. He is incapable of forming closer personal bonds, because he sees the mechanisms of self-love at work everywhere—yet he ultimately comes across as sympathetic and trustworthy. He must behave as an eccentric, having detached himself from prevailing opinions—yet he seems ridiculous only at first glance, and can even claim a kind of higher seriousness. Still, all these positive traits do not bring about any true human warmth. Rameau has something of the coldness of a "*moral monster*",[2499] a being created according to the recipes of materialistic physiology in a laboratory. Thus he is also unassailable in every respect—but only because, as the *ens rationis materialisticae* he is, he confines the articulation of his worldview to a salon corner or a casual walk, without having to practice it outside of his private life. It is precisely at this point that Diderot picks up in his second great artistic objectification of the nihilism problem. Jacques the Fatalist is much more human, much more vulnerable than Rameau. Because he must constantly confront his deterministic theory with practice, he must act—and in doing so, he must behave *as if* he believed in free will; he must approve and disapprove, react positively and negatively—as if there were fixed norms and universally valid standards. Jacques perceives his own inconsistency and is irritated by it; but otherwise one could not act, could not live. In *Jacques*, just as in *Rameau*, the philosophical question posed is not logically resolved, but comparing the two shows what Diderot, *in extremis*, considered the Achilles' heel of nihilism. He knew,

2499 Hill, "Le Monstre" in *Diderot's Thought*, 223 ff.

of course, that the practical unfeasibility of nihilism could not be considered a proof of its logical untenability. —

CHAPTER EIGHT
Special Aspects of the German Enlightenment

1. General Remark

According to its title, this chapter does not aim to provide an exhaustive account, but rather a structural-conceptual analysis of certain aspects of the German Enlightenment. Everything that can already be grasped intellectually and logically using the conceptual structures previously developed will not further concern us here. This includes, first of all, the various forms of eclecticism and popular philosophy, which remain bound to the dualism of vacillation, in that asceticism is indeed set aside but sensuality is rehabilitated only extremely cautiously, and deism is promoted but anxiously kept close to theism.[2500] Also to be excluded are analogous developments in the field of epistemology, where English empiricism especially gains ground,[2501] but must halt before the morally indispensable self-activity of reason; or in the neighboring field of the new psychology, where modern insight into the role of psychic sensuality or passions, as well as into the interweaving of the corporeal and the psychic, even manifests itself in timid materialistic approaches—yet a clear separation between higher and lower faculties, once again with regard to the moral-philosophical implications, retains the upper hand.[2502] If one considers only such dualistic constructs of thought, one might be

2500 In the moral journals, the popular philosophical positions appear very clearly; one could even assert that the latter are the philosophical sublimation of the mood that sustained the moral journals. On the dualistic moral philosophy in the latter, see Martens, *Die Botschaft der Tugend*, 231 ff., 264 ff. Cf. Wolff, *Weltanschauung der deutschen Aufklärung*, 69 ff. How Mendelssohn in his moral philosophy blended Wolff, Locke, and Hutcheson is described by Altmann, *Mendelssohns Frühschriften*, 350 ff., 372 ff.

2501 Zart, *Einfluß der englischen Philosophie*, 88 ff.

2502 Dessoir, *Geschichte der neueren deutschen Psychologie*, 210 ff., 249 ff., 400 ff.; Günther, *Wissenschaft vom Menschen*, 68 ff.

tempted to view the German Enlightenment as merely a part of a substantively uniform European movement, whose program would then grosso modo consist of the commonplaces of the (statistically impressively represented) very moderate Enlightenment direction. However, this would illegitimately homogenize the Enlightenment and thus trivialize precisely those of its aspects against whose background the commonplaces of the moderates acquire their respective specific coloration. The lukewarm rehabilitation of sensuality by German popular philosophy must, in other words, be classified differently in light of the overall intellectual spectrum than similar phenomena in France, where the rehabilitation of sensuality in some cases intensifies to materialism or even nihilism. It is precisely the absence of such tendencies that stands out in the German Enlightenment;[2503] there is no German Toland, Mandeville, or even Hume, let alone a German La Mettrie or Holbach, while at the same time Western "freethinking" meets with more or less general rejection.[2504] This cannot, however, be attributed to the stabilizing effect of popular philosophy in its plastic ambivalence, especially when one considers that the commonplaces of the moderates in Western Europe were able to isolate but not prevent materialism and nihilism. Their absence in the German Enlightenment therefore does not merely mean the absence of one element *ceteris paribus*; rather, it is due to the effective presence of other elements not (so) present in the Western European Enlightenment, which still need to be identified.

2503 Marxist-Leninists, who for obvious reasons strive to demonstrate a materialistic current in the German Enlightenment, must resort to authors who, apart from their intellectual insignificance, rather continue the tradition of mystical pantheism from the Renaissance than represent Enlightenment materialism; see Stiehler (ed.), *Geschichte des vormarxistischen Materialismus*, passim. Even the authors of the *Beiträge* occasionally have to admit that Wagner or Lau, for instance, were not atheists (87 f., 166 ff.).
2504 Vartanian, *Homme Machine*, 95 ff.; Fabian, *Reception of Mandeville*, 704 ff., 713 ff.; Krauss (ed.), *Die französische Aufklärung*, 21, 24, 31 ff., 102 ff.; Lichtenstein, *Gottscheds Ausgabe von Bayles Dictionnaire*, 50 ff.; Korff, *Voltaire im literarischen Deutschland*, 164 ff., 260 ff., 410 ff.; Mortier, *Diderot in Deutschland*, 125 ff., 140 ff., 292 ff.; Schalk, *Wirkung der Diderotschen Enzyklopädie*, in: *Studien*, 142 ff.; Naumann, *Systeme de la Nature in der deutschen Aufklärung*, Part 1, 66 ff., and Part 2, 81 ff.; Liepe, *Freigeist*, 15 ff.; Knabe, *Rezeption*, especially 111 ff., 142 ff., 149 ff., 155 ff., 167 ff.

The absence of materialism and nihilism in the German Enlightenment can undoubtedly be seen as having its necessary correlate or reverse side in its "more vivid relationship to religion," and this can even be considered its specific characteristic.[2505] However, this should not be understood as if Enlightenment and (church-organized) religion formed two more or less clearly separated entities, which, through mutual concessions, had found a better *modus vivendi* with each other than, say, in France. Rather, it concerns an interweaving that extends over broad and important areas—though by no means all. To make the possibility of this clearer terminologically, it is advisable to replace "religion" with "the religious" in the very general sense of the assumption of an ontologically given and moreover conscious bond of the human to the transcendent divine. The separation between (church-organized) religion and the religious was at least indirectly suggested and driven forward by Lutheranism;[2506] and although the Lutheran orthodoxy stabilized over the course of the 17th century sought anew to draw the religious into its spell and thus bring it under control, it remained possible—still by appeal to Lutheranism itself, that is, without lapsing into heresy and even less into irreligiosity—to evade this. Pietism arose, even in its most extremely anti-ecclesiastical forms, on Lutheran soil and, at least in its self-understanding, remained there. In contrast, Catholicism identified church-controlled and defined religion with ("true") religiosity altogether. Enlightenment thinkers with anti-theological leanings could tolerate this, indeed could even see it as negative confirmation of their own view of religion, but adherents of a freer religiosity had only the path to heresy and isolation open to them, while at the same time this same rigid attitude of the Church drove the Enlightenment movement in France into such radicalism that not even a not-fully-secularized piety of the heart could find a proper place within it. The Bull *Unigenitus* not only struck the Jansenists, but also condemned more or less related movements to broad social ineffectiveness, thereby pushing them further into fanaticism. In Germany, however, the development took a very different course: free religiosity (so long as it remained religiosity) did not first have to

2505 Holborn, *Der deutsche Idealismus*, 369 f.
2506 Troeltsch, *Protestantismus und die moderne Welt*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, 215 ff.

legitimate itself, but could instead become the gathering point for new reformational tendencies. By being channeled in a religious sense, the radical tendency of free religiosity was indeed strengthened, but its transcendent aspect also ensured a certain blunting of radicalism as such. This—also psychologically not unpleasant—combination could thus serve as the basis for bearable compromises.

The intertwining of Protestant religiosity and Enlightenment thus does not simply mean an undermining of the former by the latter, or an adaptation of the former to the latter.[2507] Nor did it arise—or not primarily—from the Enlightenment-defined "good will" or "open mind" of German intellectual life, but rather, first, from the aforementioned discrepancy between the religious and the ecclesiastical, rooted in the anti-papal affect of Lutheranism; and second, from the suitability of the secular doctrines of Protestantism (in contrast to Catholic ones)[2508] for the ideological steering or legitimization of bourgeois activity—where it must be immediately noted that the Lutheran separation of spiritual and political spheres particularly emphasized this suitability in the eyes of a bourgeoisie that had no political power or at least no political ambitions. Seen from this angle, the thesis holds true that the worldview of the German Enlightenment was rooted in the secular teachings of Protestantism, i.e., in opposition both to scholastic-speculative school philosophy and to the *Rococo* as a way of life of the nobility, against which it upheld bourgeois virtues and values (not least the practically useful).[2509] Still, one must be careful to avoid one-sidedness. Protestantism consisted not only of its secular teachings, and these did not always overshadow its metaphysical aspects. It is telling, for instance, that the—compared to the English—still rather sober German bourgeois utilitarianism was combined within Wolffian philosophy with a scholastic-ontological metaphysics; or, conversely, that it expressed itself in pietist, feeling-centered currents which clearly distanced themselves from the (Wolffian-intellectualist) reason taken as the bourgeois standard of all things, yet all the more energetically opposed the ontological speculations of (Protestant) scholasticism, speculations not inspired by

2507 Valjavec, *Geschichte der abendländischen Aufklärung*, 173, cf. 151, 187.

2508 Groethuysen, *Bürgerliche Welt- und Lebensanschauung*, II, 122 ff., especially 150 ff.

2509 Wolff, *Weltanschauung der deutschen Aufklärung*, 14, 24.

bourgeois concerns, and sought to fill the metaphysical void left by its collapse with a new intensification of free, individual religiosity. Thus the situation was complicated and contradictory—as we will see in more detail later. If one were to stay with the sociological angle, all this could be attributed to the weakness of the bourgeoisie within a still largely corporatist and absolutist political-social formation. But it must be emphasized that this weakness did not lead to isolation or ideologically unbending sectarianism; rather, because the bourgeoisie wanted to remain active within the existing rules of the game, it led to increased flexibility, also ideological flexibility, enabling all sorts of ideological combinations serving either compensation or adaptation. It must also be noted that the true ideological laboratory in 18th-century Germany was often not the bourgeois home, but the parsonage.[2510] This should highlight how problematic it is to sharply define a purely rationalistic and utilitarian ideology and assign it to clearly distinguishable bearers, or neatly separate it from other ideological tendencies. Here, the necessary negative point of reference—like the Catholic Church in France—continuously shifts and transforms. Bourgeois individualism, which in the Western European Enlightenment primarily expressed itself anthropologically and morally in the strongly anti-ascetic theory of self-love, first appeared in Germany as intimately tied to the freedom of the individual to choose their own religious path. If one emphasizes the commonality rather than the difference, one could say that both the religiously indifferent and the religious individualist equally belonged to the Enlightenment.[2511] Precisely because of this, the latter could not perceive religiosity and Enlightenment as alternatives. This, however, has an important consequence: the freedom and plasticity of religiosity becomes the vagueness of the Enlightenment—but it can thus unfold relatively unhindered. In this sense, the German Enlightenment is broader and at the same time flatter than the French one. Regarding a crucial criterion of our analysis, this means: Sensuality is primarily rehabilitated as the dynamic of the psyche against the rigidity of the intellect, with biological sensuality coming somewhat short—or, alternatively: sensuality is fully rehabilitated but simultaneously

2510 Gerth, *Bürgerliche Intelligenz*, 30; Kaiser, *Von der Aufklärung bis zum Sturm und Drang*.

2511 Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum*, 15.

spiritualized. Hence the particular vitality of German philosophy of feeling, and the possibility of metaphysical syntheses of a special kind.

How forced the reduction of the German Enlightenment to bourgeois commonplaces must remain becomes clear in the tendency of its advocates to describe *Sturm und Drang* as the overcoming of the Enlightenment or even as Counter-Enlightenment.[2512] This is essentially a new version of that very one-sided—and very old—view of the essence of the Enlightenment, which, for example, saw in Rousseau its opponent or overcomer. The misjudgment thus results not least from the already mentioned underestimation of the emotional and metaphysical aspects of Protestant religiosity compared to the secular teachings of Protestantism. If, however, one keeps in mind the entire complex in the contradiction of its components and effects, as well as the special relevance of the philosophy of feeling in the German Enlightenment, it must seem illuminating that an equally significant

2512 Wolff, *Weltanschauung der deutschen Aufklärung*, 229 ff.; following him Bedt, *German Philosophy*, 361 ff. By contrast, Krauss describes the *Sturm-und-Drang* movement as the "completion of the Enlightenment" (*Über die Konstellation der deutschen Aufklärung*, in: *Studien*, 387). Since he had previously spoken of the "unified bourgeois character of the German Enlightenment" (loc. cit., 313), he would have had to demonstrate that *Sturm und Drang* can be understood solely on the basis of purely bourgeois topoi. (The same objection can be raised against Buenzod's arguments, although he very rightly suspects that the common opposition between Enlightenment and *Sturm und Drang* rests on an "Opposition artificielle entre raison et sensibilité"; he finds the common denominator in the principle of bourgeois individualism, *De l'Aufklärung au Sturm und Drang*, 296, 313.) Yet both the consciousness-shaping function of Protestant religiosity within the bourgeoisie and its secularization by *Sturm und Drang* (see below) are simply skipped by Krauss, since he strives to emphasize the "democratic-patriotic" aspect of bourgeois worldview and thus find connection to the orthodox Marxist-Leninist schema. — Also, works that appear with a "philosophical" intention and wish to reduce the Enlightenment to its normativist self-understanding (emancipation of reason, etc.) are just as incapable as vulgar Marxism of doing justice to the diversity of intellectual phenomena. A typical example of this is Schneider's *Die wahre Aufklärung*, see especially 11 f., 22 f. The author speaks much of reason but barely explains why very different contents were connected with this word in the Age of Enlightenment or why movements such as *Sturm und Drang* could arise, which defined "Enlightenment" not as reflective reason, but as the effect of feeling.

and peculiar representative of those aspects—namely Hamann—was a forerunner of the *Sturm und Drang* movement.[2513] The step that *Sturm und Drang* made beyond Hamann was precisely the secularization of the found German-Pietist philosophy of feeling, with reference to Rousseau and Shaftesbury. This secularization process is tied to the rejection of the anthropological pessimism of the old philosophy of feeling, so that the new one can appear under the banner of a confident individualism, within which the Enlightenment's anti-ascetic rehabilitation of sensuality is acknowledged to an extent previously unknown to the German Enlighteners: the whole human being is meant to unfold and act. This is thus no longer (or not merely) the Protestant individualism in its close entanglement with (early) bourgeois individualism, but rather the self-consciousness and self-feeling of a young intellectual stratum, which seizes its chance for emancipation amid the disintegration of the old social estates, and theoretically underpins its elitist self-understanding through the glorification of the brilliant, especially artistically creative, individual. From this perspective, the prosaic and narrow world of the bourgeois must naturally have seemed unappealing; on the other hand, the representatives of the movement also viewed the nobility critically. However, they did not rebel against it *in toto* but even recognized certain positive qualities in it—and thus behaved no differently from the German bourgeoisie of the time.[2514] Their condescending subjective attitude toward the bourgeois should therefore not obscure the important objective commonalities they shared. The secularization of the philosophy of feeling reaches its peak in *Sturm und Drang*, but it had already begun at least two decades earlier with the emergence of a bourgeois sentimentalism oriented toward Western European models, and with the (partial but steadily growing) shift of the bourgeoisie away from edifying literature toward secular literature of personal experience.[2515] The educational ideal, which shattered estate-based

2513 See below, Section 2 c and 3 ac.

2514 Pascal, *Sturm und Drang*, 56 ff. The same mood also articulates itself in the moral journals; see Martens, *Die Botschaft der Tugend*, 370 ff.; Schultze, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Adel und Bürgertum*, passim, informs about the intensification of the opposition around 1800; cf. Conze, *Adel*, 25 ff.

2515 Egeling, *Der Bürger als Leser*, 182 ff., 206 ff., 252 ff. On the higher bourgeoisie as the audience of the expanding book production and the moral

hierarchies, had likewise been clearly formulated within bourgeois Enlightenment circles long before mid-century, and formulated in partial opposition to Protestant religiosity.[2516] The representatives of *Sturm und Drang* nonetheless helped the bourgeoisie toward ideological self-sufficiency insofar as, through the ideal of unfolding all the powers of the individual, they laid the groundwork for a programmatic, native, and at the same time universal humanism—one that suddenly eliminated the previous provincial narrowness of both earlier religiosity and later secular bourgeois worldviews. The synthesis of bourgeois values and humanistic education, however, would not flourish on German soil until the course of the 19th century. In the years around 1770, neither was the bourgeoisie capable of making full use of the ideological offerings of the new intelligentsia, nor could the latter fully impose its spiritual production within the then-current bourgeois horizon. Hence the (relative) tension between them.

Another aspect of this main current of the late German Enlightenment must be mentioned as a specific feature of the German Enlightenment as a whole. When its representatives secularized the religious philosophy of feeling—thus replacing religion with humanism or merging the two[2517]—their own thinking, on the other hand, remained shaped by the thought-structures of traditional free religiosity. Just as the religious philosophy of feeling had been

journals, see Gerth, *Bürgerliche Intelligenz*, 65, and Martens, *Botschaft der Tugend*, 145 ff. The turn toward profane sentimental literature is shown by the fact that after 1750 novels were no longer fiercely or unanimously condemned by the moral journals (Martens, 510 ff.). On the secularization of the philosophy of feeling through the various forms of bourgeois sentimentalism, see Wieser, *Der sentimentale Mensch*, 176 ff. The empirical psychology, which was already on the rise at that time, also processed or secularized important elements of the religious philosophy of feeling, see Stemme, *Säkularisation des Pietismus*, passim. As Brockdorff (*Deutsche Aufklärungsphilosophie*, 128) aptly notes, many representatives of the *Sturm-und-Drang* movement overlooked the fact "that the psychological elaboration of the importance of feeling... was initially a thought of Enlightenment philosophy, as in Sulzer and Mendelssohn."

2516 Wolff, *Weltanschauung der deutschen Aufklärung*, 99 ff.

2517 "They move in the border area between deism, pantheism, and Christianity towards a religion of humanity": thus Kaiser, *Von der Aufklärung bis zum Sturm und Drang*, 12.

understood as an unceasing dialogue of man with himself and with the metaphysical ground of his being, so too did its secularized successor seek not to suppress the transcendent, but to transform it so that the traditional dogmatic barrier between it and the human would fall away. By seeking the source of human potential in the primal ground of the world, they devised—through freer combinations of motifs from Leibniz, Shaftesbury, and Spinoza—an optimistic metaphysics in which free religiosity so thoroughly disregarded boundaries that many believers of a more conventional type were bound to grow concerned for the fate of religion itself. Enlightenment and religiosity thus intertwined to the point of being almost indistinguishable. Precisely because religiosity had become so free and flexible, it could also take on the task of settling certain unresolved issues of the Western European Enlightenment with nihilism. For while in Germany nihilism was absent in a positive form, it was omnipresent negatively—as a visible threat and highest danger—and in the fight against it, the German late Enlightenment joined forces with the Western European optimism. In this respect, it formed an organic part of the European whole, and if, for certain reasons, unadulterated optimism prevailed in Germany, this did not mean a tendency hostile to the Western Enlightenment as such, but only the assertion of one of the tendencies that had always been possible within the Enlightenment itself—and which thinkers like Shaftesbury had already anticipated in important respects. Accordingly, the German late Enlightenment, in combating nihilism, does not appear as a panicked retreat into theological spiritualism. Its refutation of nihilism occurs on the basis of a broad affirmation of the general Enlightenment program of rehabilitating sensuality and definitively breaking away from (Cartesian) intellectualism. The union of radical optimism with the rehabilitation of sensuality in a suitable form could, however, only be accomplished within a metaphysical synthesis founded on the belief that, ultimately, everything is good or rational.

This synthesis had above all two tasks. First, it had to weave the spirit—as bearer of the normative—and sensuality—as bearer of the causal—so closely together that the latter would not only cease to be an adversary of the former but would instead become the vehicle for the realization of its postulates. In this way, the establishment of the normative—the final victory over nihilism—was to be secured without

sacrificing the Enlightenment's fundamental commitment to the rehabilitation of sensuality, using the most advanced intellectual resources available. All this necessarily led to a permeation of the causal by the normative—a spiritualization of the sensual; the fusion of being and ought that was already prefigured in the dominant Enlightenment conception of nature had to be absolutized: the ought had to become simply being (*ὄντως ὄν*, to use the Greek), and since monism forbade positing a separate principle to explain the emergence of the sensual, the sensual, by its very origin, appeared to be already infused with the normative. — The second task of this metaphysical synthesis was this: as already noted, during the Enlightenment the idea of the whole and the idea of development stood side by side rather unmediated, as long as the fusion of being and ought had not been carried out radically within a frankly metaphysical monism, one that did not shrink from openly reintroducing metaphysics. The changeless whole appeared as the correlate of the likewise changeless, deeply rooted ought, while development—conceived along with the causally conditioned motion and change of the sensual—seemed accordingly unstable and uncertain as long as it could not be reconciled with the immutable whole or ought. Development (in nature, in history, etc.) had to guarantee the realization of the normative; and for that, it had to unfold within the already fixed, normatively defined whole, gradually bringing its deepest character to light. In other words: development originally had a normative goal, and the norm dwelt within development because development took place within the whole, or within the ontologized norm. The decisive attempts at uniting whole and development appear for the first time in the historical-philosophical constructions of Lessing and Herder, against the background of an ontology where being and ought have merged to the point of being indistinguishable. This was the path along which the German late Enlightenment—that is, its dominant current (for Kant, as we shall explain, was rather an isolated phenomenon)—tried to overcome the logical contradiction in which the Enlightenment was entangled due to the irreconcilable conflict between the causal and the normative.

2. Forms of the Confrontation between Intellectualism and Empiricism in the German Early Enlightenment

a) Wolff and his Opponents

How much the German Enlightenment is an organic part of the pan-European movement is shown by the possibility of understanding it through the struggle between intellectualism and empiricism. Its native roots and, in part, contradictory features nonetheless simultaneously made themselves extremely apparent in the particular character of its corresponding currents. Its intellectualism initially appears as an adoption or further development of scholastic realism, whereas conversely its empiricism is borne not least by the religious philosophy of feeling, which opposes the claims to omniscience and the hubris of the intellect. Thus occurs the paradox that intellectualism, which under the given German circumstances is supposed to articulate the modern or Enlightenment faith in reason, falls back on scholastic thought, while the secular Western European empiricism, which is nominalist-phenomenalist in orientation and renounces the omniscience of reason, (also) gains entrance into Germany with the help of religious currents. Our analysis of Enlightenment rationalism has shown for which (polemical) reasons faith in reason and the acceptance of its limits had to go hand in hand.[2518] The particularity of the German development has brought it about that one aspect of the Enlightenment position could often turn against the other, whereby each of the two allied itself with an originally non-secular-Enlightenment (scholastic-realist or religious-feeling-philosophical) position. From this results not only a curious opposition but also a curious reciprocal influence. Indeed, the empiricism of the religious philosophy of feeling comes close to Western European empiricism and thus contributes to the modernization of German intellectual life, yet it by no means wishes to fall into the dangerous nominalism and therefore (in Crusius, for example) harbors a certain respect for Wolff's

2518 See above, Chapter IV, Section 2b; Chapter V, Section 2b; Chapter VI, Section 5.

ontology;[2519] and conversely, even the clear rejection of Wolffian ontology and the theoretical omnipotence of reason does not eo ipso mean a complete adoption of religious philosophy of feeling: Kant's example shows that intellectualism, still necessary as a weapon against empiricist skepticism, can be retained in a modernized form. The essential limitation of its domain of validity even in this latter case is nevertheless a sign that in Germany, too, one way or another, the general anti-intellectualist trend is being followed.

The strength of the empiricist current in Germany becomes visible, among other things, in the fate of Wolffianism—positively in that its triumph was short-lived, and negatively in that this triumph did not simply and not in every case result from the specifically intellectualist character of Wolffianism. Especially for the younger lecturers who decisively contributed to the establishment of Wolffianism as a school philosophy in the universities,[2520] Wolff meant something more than dry syllogistics—namely, a break with the cult of tradition and a liberating modernization in the sense of faith in the power of reason, in the transparently rational structure of the world (for Wolff had excluded miracles, albeit by way of the *miraculum restitutionis*), in the autonomy of moral truths, etc.;[2521] the very cautious legitimization of the demand for happiness—always in its connection with moral activity—[2522]as well as the emphasis on the practical usefulness of knowledge, which even expressed itself in an identification of the perfect and the useful, made Wolffianism, as a moderate bourgeois ideology, even more modern and attractive.[2523] The persecution of Wolff,[2524] which moreover benefitted the spread of his writings and ideas, had to appear as a visible confirmation of his progressive spirit. Another advantage or modern aspect of Wolffianism

2519 Tonelli, *Weakness of Reason*, 226 ff., 231.
2520 Ludovici, *Historie der Wolffischen Philosophie*, I, 332 ff.; III, 160 ff.
2521 How Wolff arrived at the final formulation of the principle of moral autonomy by deriving morality from the *natura mentis* is described by Campo, *Wolff*, II, 504 ff.; cf. Joesten, *Wolffs Grundlegung der praktischen Philosophie*, 26 ff.
2522 op. cit., 67 f.; cf. Wolff, *Weltanschauung der deutschen Aufklärung*, 101 ff.
2523 Merker, *Illuminismo tedesco*, 89; cf. Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 274 f.; Ludovici, *Historie der Wolffischen Philosophie*, I, 134 ff.
2524 The documents can be found in Ludovici, *Historie der Wolffischen Philosophie*, III, 98 ff.

was the effort to incorporate the newer results of the natural sciences into the construction of the system and at the same time to integrate mechanism into a broader framework in such a way that it could not have resulted in atheism; this effort was all the more important (at least psychologically) as it sought to fill the disturbing gap that the victories of both Cartesianism and Newtonianism had torn into the wall of theism based on scholastic doctrine. The usual solution that presented itself to those who wanted to defend causal-mechanistic explanations of nature while maintaining orthodox theism was, as we know, strict dualism.[2525] In this respect, Wolff initially stands in the succession of Descartes; ultimately, at least in the question of the soul-body relationship, he resorts to the pre-established harmony.[2526]

It would be expected that the mathematician Wolff would be particularly receptive to intellectualist dualism. The peculiarity or rather the anachronism of his thought lies not here, but in the attempt to fuse his mathematical and his scholastic training within a unified intellectual structure. Yet he does not wish to do this as a mere scholastic, but primarily as a mathematician, however vague his understanding of mathematics may be.[2527] He seeks namely to eradicate Aristotelian empiricism from the traditional scholastic mindset and to elevate its syllogistics to the status of the modern mathematical procedure;[2528] mathematical and philosophical methodology are now to be identical. He neither denies the significance of empirical research nor the relative cognitive value of the lower faculties,[2529] but empiricism as a whole must be intellectualized

2525 Wolff's mechanism in its anti-materialistic function is described by Philipp, *Werden der Aufklärung*, 129 ff.

2526 The development of Wolff in this sense is described by Campo, *Wolff*, I, 268 ff., 285 ff.; cf. Bissinger, *Gotteserkenntnis*, 116 ff.

2527 Campo (*Wolff*, I, 109 ff.) has shown the insurmountable obstacles that Wolff's mathematical approach had to face, not least because of the vagueness of his concept of mathematics. Cf. Röd, *Geometrischer Geist und Naturrecht*, 123 f.

2528 Wundt, *Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 131 ff., 151 f. The syncretism of Catholic theology and Lutheran elements in Wolff is emphasized by Schöffler, *Deutsches Geistesleben*, 200 ff.

2529 In his effort to emphasize the "modern" aspect of the German Enlightenment, Merker (*Illuminismo tedesco*, 83 ff.) overestimates the role of experience vis-à-vis the intellectualist component in Wolff. Beck sees the

in order to function fruitfully within the secure knowledge that proceeds deductively and arrives at conclusions whose truth criterion is the absence of any logical contradiction. Freedom from contradiction or undisturbed thinkability characterizes the possible in general, the science of which is philosophy proceeding mathematically-syllogistically.[2530] The recourse to scholastic realism culminates in the identification of the essence and the concept of things, or of principles of thought and laws of the world. Details need not concern us in this context. What is important in the history of thought is that Wolff, in his effort to modernize scholasticism in the spirit of mathematics and thereby to grant the originally anti-scholastic mechanistic worldview the scholastic anti-materialistic guarantee, unintentionally confirmed the fears and arguments of those many Enlighteners who were accustomed to throw scholastic syllogistics and mathematical methodology into the same pot and reject both as expressions of the same abstract intellectualism. When Wolff, in good faith, sought to reinforce aspects of the modern spirit by appealing to a likewise modern science such as mathematics, he did not suspect that the dominant Enlightenment current would, within a short time, rise against mathematics and scholasticism with equal fury; he namely did not know that scholasticism and syllogistics would simply be identified and that therefore his effort at purification or modernization of scholasticism would not be appreciated at all, but only found all the more abominable. His peculiar connection of scholasticism and mathematics did a long-term disservice to the latter and to intellectualism in general, without helping the former either.

problem much more accurately by pointing to the logical difficulties in accommodating empiricism within Wolff's system (*Early German Philosophy*, 267 f.). Campo (*Wolff*, I, 98 f.) argues similarly. The difficulties of an intellectualist at a time when empiricism was on the rise and mathematics was correspondingly devalued are also indirectly reflected in Wolff's and his students' distancing from extreme mathematization, see Tonelli, *Der Streit über die mathematische Methode*, 53 f.

2530 Lüthje traces the ambiguity of Wolff's concept of possibility back to the fact that it originally referred only to empirical possibility (*Wolffs Philosophiebegriff*, 56). As Lüthje remarks (ibid.), this must necessarily result in an ambiguity of the concept of philosophy itself or generate an "unstable dogmatism," as Campo expresses it (*Wolff*, I, 193 ff.). Cf. Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 263 ff.

Therefore, the aspects of his thought that were positively received even outside the circle of his faithful followers were largely forgotten in the German late Enlightenment.

The empiricist current in Germany does not constitute a marginal phenomenon or a mere reaction against Wolff, but an independent phenomenon that temporally precedes the temporary ascendancy of Wolffianism and even marks the beginning of the German Enlightenment. It is largely represented by the first generation of German Enlighteners and is then pushed back by Wolffianism, only to reemerge strongly in the third generation, this time, however, within a broader metaphysical framework: this explains why the empiricists of the first generation could not be direct teachers and models for those of the third.[2531] In the outstanding figure of the German Enlightenment that already begins before 1700, Thomasius, we encounter epistemological empiricism as a component of a thoroughly modern worldview. Original insights in detail, however, are not Thomasius' strength; despite vehement polemics against scholastic logic, he remains substantively bound to it,[2532] and even his thesis that the senses are the beginning of all human knowledge[2533] constitutes an adoption of the Aristotelian axiom *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu* and was more confirmed than inspired by Locke.[2534] All the more striking is the fact that, following this, conceptions are developed that constitute the antipodes to the Aristotelian scholasticism still dominant in the universities at the time. Just as Western European empiricism in general,[2535] so too that of Thomasius is not an isolated epistemological position but is tied to a worldview-conditioned substantive shift in the interests of knowledge: it means the elimination of speculative metaphysics and the prioritization of anthropological questioning. To recognize truth, writes Thomasius, knowledge of the essence of reason is required, and this again

2531 Cf. Wundt, *Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 122 f.
2532 Petersen, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie*, 386 f.; Wundt (*Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 41 f.) finds clear precursors of Thomasius' efforts in seventeenth-century German philosophy. However, the decisive factor remains the shift in worldview, which became noticeable through Thomasius.
2533 *Einleitung zu der Vernunftlehre*, VI, § 25 (= p. 156).
2534 Wolf, *Große Rechtsdenker*, 396; Wundt, *Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 31, note.
2535 See above, Chapter V, Section 2b.

presupposes knowledge of "what the whole human being is".[2536] Thus a first step is taken toward that psychologization of logic which largely characterizes the Enlightenment;[2537] also in Thomasius, it understandably goes hand in hand with a nominalist approach. "Words have their validity *ex arbitrio hominum*, not *ex natura*," from which it follows "that human thoughts, without relation to something else, are in and of themselves neither true nor false".[2538] The consequences for universals and syllogistics are obvious; Thomasius energetically denies that the latter could lead to the discovery of new truths,[2539] and alongside the epistemological arguments he places the expression of his contempt for book learning and the call for independent thinking, which is averse to all authority.[2540] Thomasius also adopts another typically Enlightenment position[2541] when he throws Cartesian intellectualism and mathematism into the same pot with scholastic syllogistics and combats both from an empiricist position, while at the same time fully recognizing Descartes' significance for the emancipation of modern thought.[2542]

These, then, are the epistemological and cognitive-theoretical consequences of starting from the "whole human being." The consequences in moral philosophy are no less weighty. Thomasius also acts as a pioneer here,[2543] although he brings to light no substantively original insights in this domain either, but largely relies on the various theories of the affects from the 17th century;[2544] outwardly, at least, his doctrine of virtue appears as a free mixture of Stoic, Epicurean, and Christian elements. Important is that the latter are largely secularized, insofar as the Christian topos of love—which constitutes the essence of

2536 *Einleitung zu der Vernunftlehre*, III, § 1 (= p. 95); Thomasius' emphasis.
2537 See above, Chapter V, Section 3ab.
2538 *Einleitung zu der Vernunftlehre*, V, §§ 42, 45 (= pp. 146, 147).
2539 op. cit., XII, §§ 1–30 (= pp. 265 ff.).
2540 *Ausübung der Vernunftlehre*, I, § 87 (= p. 42); II, § 137 (= pp. 140 f.), etc.
2541 See above, Chapter IV, Section 3b.
2542 Röd, *Geometrischer Geist und Naturrecht*, 151 ff., 160 f.
2543 His *Einleitung zur Sittenlehre* appeared between 1692 and 1726 eight times in German and once in Latin; the *Einleitung zur Vernunftlehre* had five German and two Latin editions between 1691 and 1719.
2544 On these, see Schneiders, *Naturrecht und Liebesethik*, 183 ff.; cf. above, Chapter II, Section 3b.

the human being—[2545]receives on the one hand a natural-law interpretation (innate *socialitas*)[2546] and on the other hand a eudaimonistic[2547] as well as a strongly erotic, anti-ascetic[2548] coloration. Thomasius' conception, however, is not free from half-measures and ambiguities,[2549] yet it is founded on an unmistakable tendency toward the rehabilitation of sensibility. Even where reasonable love is distinguished from unreasonable love, it does not mean the strict governance of affect by reason, but much more an innate rationality of affect; for even reasonable love remains "desire" or "work of the will".[2550] Thomasius' view becomes even clearer in an anti-Cartesian or Locke-inspired turn, where he denies "that the essence of man consists solely and exclusively in thought. For the inclination and drive of the will is a much nobler power than the thought of the understanding".[2551] Thomasius' voluntarism thus results from the rehabilitation of (psychic) sensibility and constitutes the necessary reverse side of an anti-intellectualist attitude, as is typical of the Enlightenment.[2552] This binding of voluntarism and anti-intellectualism solidifies and deepens after Thomasius' turn toward Pietism, and hardly diminishes even after his withdrawal from it.[2553] In the Pietist perspective, however, it is no longer the case that the healthy affect of love automatically results in reason, but rather that the power of the intellect is nullified by the power of blind will or of the passions, in which human sinfulness is grounded. In view of the fact that the rationality of affect had by no means been understood as the dominion of the intellect, the change in the structure of thought remains minimal, even though the earlier optimistic anthropology now transforms into a pessimistic one: as we know and as we will also see

2545 *Einleitung zur Sittenlehre*, II, § 72 (= p. 88).
2546 loc. cit., §§ 74–79 (= pp. 89–91).
2547 loc. cit., § 4 (= p. 58).
2548 op. cit., IV, §§ 34 ff. (= pp. 172 ff.); V, §§ 9 ff. (= pp. 261 ff.).
2549 See the excellent analysis by Schneiders, *Naturrecht und Liebesethik*, 150 ff., 169 ff.
2550 *Einleitung zur Sittenlehre*, IV, §§ 7–8 (= p. 159).
2551 *Ausübung der Sittenlehre*, III, § 21 (= p. 81).
2552 See above, Chapter V, Section 3b.
2553 *Fundamenta Juris Naturae* I, 1, especially §§ 34 (interweaving of love and will), 36 (against the Cartesians and Aristotelian philosophers), 46 (the will leads the intellect, not vice versa) = pp. 37, 38, 41.

in examples from the German late Enlightenment,[2554] it often happens that one and the same structure of thought can be labeled now with pessimistic, now with optimistic signs, or that one replaces the other while retaining the structure of thought. Speculations about Thomasius' personal reasons for the conversion to Pietism cannot be undertaken here; however, the established permanence of the structure of his anthropological conception may logically explain the possibility of that conversion. Moreover, the anti-intellectualist anthropology on both sides was linked with similar practical-educational notions. The devaluation of the intellect simultaneously implies a fundamental rejection of the Aristotelian ideal of pure theory and a corresponding prioritization of useful activity, which in turn was intended to confirm the new primacy of anthropology or of the concrete-human[2555] and was furthermore appreciated for its psychologically edifying effect in taming selfish affects. The shared sympathy for a natural religion also springs from the anti-intellectualist attitude, insofar as religion is conceived as the spontaneous voice of the heart, having little to do with the rationalistic sophistries of the professional theologians, from which religious divisions and wars were usually thought to arise. As one sees, Thomasius' agreement with Pietism concerns above all freely interpretable commonplaces, so that statements about the depth and correctness of his Pietist faith are difficult to verify. Although much suggests that Thomasius never truly reconciled himself with the Pietist subordination of philosophical thinking to theological perspectives, nor ever unconditionally surrendered to mysticism,[2556] nonetheless his relatively brief association with religious philosophy is intellectually revealing and rich in consequences for the future.

This already becomes visible in Rüdiger's work, who approaches Thomasius precisely during Thomasius' Pietist-influenced phase and explicitly connects his later critique of Wolffian

2554 See above, Chapter VI, Section 3b and Chapter VII, Section 1; cf. below, Section 2b, 3a.

2555 The specific form that this primacy takes in the theological context of Pietism is very well described by Herrmann, *Recht und pietistische Theologie bei Thomasius*, 41 ff.

2556 Neisser, *Thomasius*, 35 f., 46 (cf. 12 ff. on the instinctive mistrust of Thomasius' faith by Spener and Francke); Seeberg, *Thomasius und Arnold*, 340 f.

intellectualism with his religious convictions.[2557] Although Rüdiger contrasts corrupted human reason with *recta ratio*—and thereby, just like his teacher, defends the independence of philosophy against Pietist monopolistic claims—this *recta ratio* fundamentally differs from the intellect: it is not innate and can be explained empirically-genetically;[2558] the primacy of the will is also asserted.[2559] Thus, the paths of the religiously inspired anti-intellectualist attitude and Western European empiricism of Lockean provenance intersect. Correspondingly, Rüdiger rejects innate ideas and even radicalizes Locke in a manner partly anticipating Condillac, by replacing *reflection* with *sensio interna* in order to emphasize the sensuous conditioning even of the higher faculty of cognition.[2560] Sense perception, however, for him is not only the source of all concepts but also the criterion of truth; against the traditional *adaequatio rei et intellectus* he defines truth as the correspondence between representation and sense perception.[2561] This in turn implies the (religiously grounded) thesis of the unknowability of substances and *veritates aeternae*, since only recognized substance can be compared with the content of the intellect,[2562] and thus also suggests a methodological reorientation. Rüdiger combats the claim to omniscience of intellectualism both in its mathematical and in its syllogistic form, treating both—just like the main current of the Enlightenment—as equivalent. Mathematics, he argues, is rooted in sense perceptions, since all its operations can be traced back to an act of counting;[2563] and syllogistics hardly yields new insights, that is, causal and final judgments. Rüdiger therefore proposes replacing traditional syllogistics with a "synthetic" one, which could become a true *ars inveniendi*.[2564] It is particularly noteworthy that Rüdiger follows up his epistemological refutation of intellectualism with an ontological questioning of the dualism between

2557 Schepers, *Rüdigers Methodologie*, 31 f.
2558 op. cit., 35, 38, 42.
2559 Wundt, *Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 87 f.
2560 Schepers, *Rüdigers Methodologie*, 53 ff.
2561 Thus, he also opposes Wolff's formal definition of truth, see Zart, *Einfluß der englischen Philosophie*, 54.
2562 Schepers, *Rüdigers Methodologie*, 72 ff.
2563 Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, 113, 526.
2564 Merker, *Illuminismo tedesco*, 110 ff., 118 ff.

mind and matter, merging physics and metaphysics. He wants substance to be originally endowed with forces or faculties, to be extended (thus material), and to encompass the likewise extended mind.[2565] However, this is not a materialistic construction but rather a colorful one, teeming with spiritualist-vitalist elements, reminiscent of Renaissance natural philosophy, and characteristically directed against both Aristotelian and Cartesian physics;[2566] it is not the construction itself but the monistic tendency it manifests, in its connection with Rüdiger's anthropological and epistemological convictions, that is of interest to us. From the same perspective, Thomasius' cosmological-metaphysical speculations, which lean on H. More's spiritualist monism,[2567] could likewise not merely be interpreted as a personal eccentricity.

A. E. Hoffmann develops the fundamental positions of his teacher Rüdiger further by placing them in the service of a systematic polemic against the flourishing Wolffianism. The empiricist starting point (no innate ideas, origin of knowledge from sense perception)[2568] also here leads to a critique of Wolff's theory of truth and the associated ontology. For Hoffmann, truth does not lie in the mere non-contradictoriness of thought, but in the correspondence between thought and object. The rigid, impersonal objectivity of the logisms in Wolff is broken by Hoffmann through the observation that the ground of the logism is to be found in the subject itself.[2569] The anthropologizing framing thus becomes the foundation of the philosophical effort at thinking, which first manifests itself in a psychologization of logic. Hoffmann wants to discover or derive the principles of logic from experience itself; on the other hand, he believes he escapes psychologism by likewise trying to read them off from the things themselves.[2570] However, this does not mean any concession to Wolff. For Hoffmann, metaphysics (in the new Enlightenment sense of

2565 Schepers, *Rüdigers Methodologie*, 67; Wundt, *Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 244.

2566 op. cit., 92; cf. Petersen, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie*, 416 f.

2567 Neisser, *Thomasius*, 50 f.

2568 Wundt, *Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 252; Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 301.

2569 Wundt, *Deutsche Schulphilosophie*, 250, 253.

2570 Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 302 ff.

this term)[2571] can only have as its object the real and approximately knowable, not the possible and intellectually exhaustively comprehensible. Correspondingly, his objections to mathematics are shaped within a sharp opposition between philosophical and mathematical procedure. The latter not only excludes a genetic-historical consideration (we recall how closely this is tied to empiricist epistemology),[2572] but it can also provide no *ars inveniendi*; mathematics, though not arbitrary, nevertheless deals with abstract concepts that contain nothing more than what is already found in the original definition, whereas in philosophy the individual comes into its own, which is not merely a repetition or reproduction of the abstract general.[2573] Prominent Enlighteners in France argue similarly not long after.[2574] It seems paradoxical that here, qualitative consideration—severely battered by mechanistic natural philosophy—asserts itself so stubbornly against quantitative consideration. Yet this is not simply a survival of Aristotelianism or of Renaissance natural philosophy, but a genuine sign of Enlightenment anti-intellectualism. Mendelssohn wrote a few years later that mathematics indeed possessed the highest evidence, but that this was only quantitative, whereas metaphysics, which deals with qualities, stands in much greater need of the "testimony of the senses." Now, however, one could conclude from the inapplicability of mathematics to metaphysics that the latter is incapable of clear knowledge and therefore ought to be abolished: a thought that would not fail to influence Kant.[2575]

All these motives of thought were taken up and deepened by Hoffmann's student Crusius (as we see, an unbroken line leads from Thomasius to Crusius both intellectually and personally). To Wolff's intellectualist monism, Crusius opposed a considered dualism, which directly or indirectly secured for experience in knowledge and for will or drive in anthropology and morality their autonomy, by separating their domain from that of the intellect and thus withdrawing them from the latter's imperative grasp. This was not an abolition, but certainly a significant limitation of the intellect, which articulated itself

2571 See above, Chapter V, Section 3a.
2572 See above, Chapter IV, Section 4, Chapter V, Section 1.
2573 Tonelli, *Mathematische Methode*, 56.
2574 See above, Chapter V, Section 2a.
2575 Tonelli, *Mathematische Methode*, 61, 63, 64 ff.

in the fundamental refusal to establish a necessary relation between the objectively existing structure of things and the conceptual grasp thereof, or even to acknowledge the former as dependent on the latter. A separation of epistemology and ontology is the significant consequence of this basic attitude. Logical and real necessity do not coincide, contradiction-free thinking and cognition are not identical —[2576]and since, on the other hand, the striving of thought for logical unity and freedom from contradiction is not underestimated but rather regarded as necessary or unavoidable (i.e., as a direct outflow of the nature of operative thinking),[2577] all these considerations lead to the thesis that there are deeper layers of being that must forever elude the grasp of such constituted thinking. Thus, between this position of Crusius and intellectualism there exists a partial or negative agreement: Crusius concedes the primarily logical character of the operations of thought, but sees in it rather a fate than an invincible power; logically proceeding thought remains unassailable, but only within its, or rather its own, domain, which is anything but all-encompassing.[2578] On this position ultimately rests Crusius' distinction between philosophical and mathematical procedure. The validity of mathematical propositions is not in itself disputed, but their ability to extend beyond insights gained by the mere law of contradiction is.[2579] The same applies to philosophy, though on a higher level: it can indeed move beyond the mere law of contradiction, but the cognition of the essential nature must nevertheless remain forever denied to it.

The curtailment of the omnipotence of the intellect now proceeds in two ways. In epistemological terms, the origin of thoughts

2576 Crusius' critique or supplementation of the principle of contradiction and the doctrine of sufficient reason (*Entwurf* §§ 13–16, 34–38 = pp. 23 ff., 54 ff.) as well as his refutation of the ontological proof of God (*Entwurf* § 235 = p. 436 ff.). Cf. *Weg* §§ 258–262 = pp. 467 ff.

2577 *Weg* § 259 (= p. 468: "… the arrangement of concepts follows from the nature of the understanding") and §§ 571 ff. (= pp. 995 ff.: analytical and synthetical procedure as well as "some general rules of meditation"). Cf. *Entwurf* § 233 (= p. 432: reliable knowledge need not be complete) and § 287 (= p. 533: "in the nature of our understanding lie certain marks of truth").

2578 *Entwurf* §§ 12–16, 56 (= pp. 22 ff., 99 ff.), cf. *Weg* §§ 259–260 (= pp. 467 ff.).

2579 *Weg* § 10 (= p. 19 f.), cf. *Entwurf* §§ 115–117 (= pp. 188 ff.).

from experience is emphasized.[2580] It is indeed a tremendous elevation of experience when it is assumed that certain things must remain unknown because they are inaccessible to experience or to "perceptual cognition." Our knowledge of the fundamental forces or of the fundamental essence of things is only "symbolic," that is, it rests on the ascertainment or logical grasp of effects and relations and not on the immediate intuition of the ontically given.[2581] In the full acknowledgment of the independence of the latter lies precisely the second decisive blow by Crusius against intellectualism, insofar as the latter did not wish to admit the reality of the irrational or of what cannot be grasped through logical means. The irrational (in this sense) is now ontologically rehabilitated, and insofar as Crusius still accepts thinkability as a criterion of reality, he rather understands it as a multiplicity of cooperating principles and not as a mere formal-logical operation.[2582] Corresponding to the separation of epistemology and ontology in Crusius is the distinction between being and ought in a moral-philosophical intention.[2583] And just as experience and the irrational benefit from the former, so too does willing, as opposed to intellect, benefit from the latter.[2584] In accordance with Crusius' dualistic basic theme, however, this does not mean the dominion of blind desire in moral action, but—precisely because of the assumed original belonging-together of willing and freedom, from which a voluntarist expansion of the concept of spirit results—[2585]a separation of moral and physical causes of the same, taking into account the fact that the moral causes can become practically effective only through the physical ones.[2586] Material and formal elements in ethics are thus

2580 *Weg* §§ 64, 257 (= pp. 111 f., 466 f.).
2581 *Weg* §§ 184–186 (= pp. 347 ff.); cf. *Entwurf* §§ 102, 258 (= pp. 175, 485). On fundamental forces or fundamental beings see *Entwurf* §§ 70 ff. (= pp. 125 ff.). Crusius also assumes the *immediate subsistence* of force in the simple substance (*Entwurf* § 111 = p. 186).
2582 Heimsoeth, *Crusius*, 42 (cf. *Entwurf* § 444 = pp. 908 ff.); following Wundt (*Kant als Metaphysiker*, 58, 73), Heimsoeth (15 ff.) sees the essential moment of Crusius' approach in the ontological rehabilitation of the irrational.
2583 *Anweisung* § 155 (= p. 195).
2584 *Entwurf* § 454 (= p. 933).
2585 *Anweisung* §§ 2–3 (= p. 4 f.); cf. the analysis of Crusius' concept of freedom by Benden, *Crusius*, 79 ff.
2586 *Anweisung* §§ 43 ff. (= pp. 54 ff.).

theoretically cleanly separated,[2587] with the necessity of their union or mutual supplementation in practice being emphasized.[2588] This autonomization of willing in man results, as already in Hoffmann, from the thesis of the incompatibility of sufficient reason or causality with freedom and is accompanied by an analogous elevation of the divine will.[2589] Here, the rejection of intellectualism intertwines with Crusius' religious faith, a process whose reasons and consequences have already occupied us in various ways.

As stated, a direct influence of the thinkers who, during the first and second generation of the German Enlightenment, fought against intellectualism in its scholastic or Wolffian form on the leading representatives of the German late Enlightenment failed to materialize, which showed itself not least in Kant's intellectual isolation despite all the enthusiasm for him and the eager but free interpretation of his work. This fact must be satisfactorily explained if we wish to better understand the specific character of the German late Enlightenment, that is, its monistic approach, from an intellectual-historical perspective. The particular needs of the polemic against Wolff had compelled the empiricist current in Germany to adopt a dualistic position, which was unacceptable to the prevailing direction of the German late Enlightenment. This was due neither to a logical weakness of the said dualism nor to a neglect of the ethical postulates of the Enlightenment (quite the contrary: in order to defend them, it fought against Wolffianism in this way and not through an extreme empiricism that could easily have slid into materialistic monism), but simply to the intensity of the monistic approach, particularly after 1770, which could not be satisfied with any dualism, however finely conceived and logically fortified it might have been. Now intellectualism was no longer combated as monism, but as the suppression of the sensuous and living; and in the case of the anti-intellectualistic dualism, it was again rather the dualistic stance that was condemned than the anti-intellectualistic thrust praised. This simultaneous, though not equally weighted, rejection of both prevailing currents of the German Enlightenment was entirely consistent, since the aim was to reconcile monism with the

2587 *Anweisung* § 177 (= p. 221).

2588 Benden, *Crusius*, 153 f., 166.

2589 *Entwurf* §§ 307 ff. (= pp. 583 ff.); cf. Wundt, *Kant als Metaphysiker*, 59, 62 f.

rehabilitation of sensibility—not in the sense of nihilism, but precisely in the absolute, that is, ontologically conceived, intensification of the struggle against it.

We will be able to better understand this constellation if we examine and differentiate the meaning of monism and dualism more precisely. Intellectualism, namely, proceeds from a dualistic assumption insofar as it adopts the Cartesian separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* in order to preserve the independence of the former intact. However, it transforms into monism by intellectualizing or logifying empiricism, indeed by seeing its essence in the logical, thereby subjecting it to the rule of the intellect and at the same time making this rule absolute: it is secure only if the intellect is the sole reality, or if it alone can, at least philosophically, call reality into existence. On the other side, radical dualism opposes only the monistic claim of intellectualism, not its more or less Cartesian starting point. The Cartesian element persists, to varying degrees, both in monistic intellectualism and in radical dualism (we have already spoken of the partial or negative agreement between Crusius and Wolff)—and precisely this commonality with Wolff made the approach of Crusius and Kant unusable for the German late Enlightenment (of course, the radical dualism of Crusius and Kant has nothing to do with the dualism we have described as a wavering attitude on the way toward a union of spirit and sensibility and as the at least quantitatively prevailing current of the Enlightenment in general). Nevertheless, the anti-intellectualist aspect of radical dualism was carefully registered and utilized. As, for example, Jacobi's later appeal to Kant shows,[2590] the third generation of the German Enlightenment recognized in the doctrine of the unknowability of the thing in itself primarily the welcome and long-overdue curtailment of the absolute power of the intellect, as it had been asserted within the framework of Wolffian monism. Beyond that, the confrontation with Wolff—even from the standpoint of radical dualism—clarified the central importance of the question concerning the relations between spirit and sensibility. The intellectual vitality of the Enlightenment lies not least in the fact that it thematized this fundamental philosophical question directly. Even the most intense phase of the German Enlightenment stands under the sign of the insight that the answering of this question is tied to

2590 Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 157.

fundamental decisions. How urgent and pressing it appeared around 1770 is symbolically shown by Kant's original plan to give the first Critique the title *The Limits of Sensibility and Reason*.[2591]

To complete our picture, we must recall those tendencies that illustrate the internal process of dissolution of Wolffianism under the direct and indirect pressure of a fundamentally anti-intellectualist age. Meant here are above all Baumgarten and his students.[2592] Baumgarten represents a highly symptomatic case insofar as he fully supports Wolffian epistemology and the priority of the logical, and, without breaking the strict Wolffian hierarchy, nonetheless asserts its lower levels in such a way that the whole becomes endangered. Thus, despite his philosophical premises, Baumgarten gives independent significance to elements that he considered insufficient (if not even unjust) only because they were emphatically highlighted in other contemporary currents that were almost diametrically opposed to the one he himself cultivated.[2593] It can be doubted whether Baumgarten was fully aware of his ambiguous position, otherwise he could have avoided some of the vacillation in his argumentation. But this side of his work is not our concern here.[2594] In the broader intellectual-historical perspective, neither his palinodes nor the lack of awareness about the scope and consequences of the task he undertook matter, but

2591 Letter to M. Herz of June 7, 1771 = *AA*, X, 117.

2592 Here is not the place to report in detail on the (conceptually-structurally not very fruitful) prehistory of Baumgarten's aesthetics. The necessary information can be found in Bäumler, *Irrationalitätsproblem*, 66 ff. (on König, Gottsched, and the Swiss), 188 ff. (Wolff's doctrine of the *analogon rationis*); Stein, *Entstehung der neueren Ästhetik*, 271 ff. (on the Swiss); Wolff, *Weltanschauung der deutschen Aufklärung*, 142 ff. (on Gottsched and the Swiss); on Bilfinger's early call for a kind of logic of the lower faculties of cognition, which may have influenced the Swiss, see Bergmann, *Begründung der deutschen Ästhetik*, 2.

2593 This is shown, for example, by the influence of a sensualist like Du Bos on him, see Riemann, *Die Ästhetik Baumgartens*, 76 ff. Precisely the independence of Baumgarten's aesthetic interests made such influence possible, cf. Stein, *Entstehung der neueren Ästhetik*, 346: "One must abandon the view that Baumgarten's aesthetics arose as a filling of a gap in a philosophical school system."

2594 On this, see the very precise and differentiated interpretation by Schweizer, *Ästhetik als Philosophie der sinnlichen Erkenntnis*, passim.

only that he posed such a task at all. In a time when the word "aesthetics" still fully retained its original meaning, the drafting of an *Aesthetica* had to be a highly significant event; it implied the philosophical emancipation of the sensuous, as was already expressed in the pointed combination of *cognitio* with the adjective *sensitiva*: if knowledge is sensuous and nevertheless remains knowledge in the proper sense, then eo ipso the omnipotence of the intellect is called into question—especially since Baumgarten emphasizes that he wishes to speak of sensuous knowledge as such (*qua talis*).

The famous definition of the goal of aesthetics, which is alluded to here,[2595] contains yet another word that points to the tendency toward the autonomization of sensuous knowledge—namely, the word *perfectio*: if sensuous knowledge as such is capable of perfection, then it is no longer the embodiment of the incurably inert and dead, but possesses its own dynamism and potential for development. In the light of this elevation of sensibility in epistemological terms, Baumgarten's statement must also be understood, that the *facultates inferiores* are the *conditio sine qua non* of the higher faculties of knowledge; it is mere prejudice, he says, to think that the *pulchritudo ingenii* must be opposed to the "severioribus intelligendi ratiocinandique dotibus".[2596] The same thought reappears in the *Prolegomena*, where Baumgarten defends his theoretical undertaking against intellectualist objections. Sensuous *confusio*, we read here,[2597] is not only "mater erroris" but at the same time "conditio sine qua non inveniendae veritatis," for "natura non facit saltum ex obscuritate in distinctionem." It appears here momentarily as if Baumgarten tends to replace Wolff's strict separation of the faculties with the historical-genetic explanation of the empiricist Enlightenment (which, however, would rather be attributable here to the influence of Leibniz's *lex continui*),[2598] where the ideal of a harmonious cooperation of the faculties of cognition floats before his eyes. At any rate, he speaks out against the "tyrannis" and for the mere "imperium" of the higher over

2595 *"Aesthetices finis est perfectio cognitionis sensitivae, qua talis*," *Aesthetica* § 14 (= p. 6).
2596 *op. cit.*, § 41 (= p. 17).
2597 *op. cit.*, § 7 (= p. 3).
2598 See below, Section 3 a.

the lower,[2599] while just before, regarding the possibility of their coexistence, he says: "uniius positio non est alterius exclusio".[2600] On the basis of such assumptions, Baumgarten now proceeds, following Cicero, to work out the commonalities between the aesthetic and the logical, which leads to the renaming of that truth "quae huc usque logica tantum dicta est" into "veritatem aestheticologicam".[2601]

Obviously, in this highly remarkable approximation or connection between the aesthetic and the logical, at least unconsciously, motives of thought are at work that point toward the abandonment of a fundamental position of intellectualism, and indeed in the direction represented by Crusius. Immediately before, Baumgarten advances the following reflection: objective truth can be called only metaphysical; logical truth is the "repraesentatio objective verorum in data anima," and as such it is designated as subjective.[2602] Objective truth, then, must be modified or subjectivized in order to become human knowledge; it must appear in the perspective of the subject—but this subject possesses not only a logical but also an aesthetic perspective, and the objective metaphysical truth, as Baumgarten assures us, can appear in both. Logical knowledge thus stands on the same level as aesthetic knowledge, in the sense that both are forms of the subjectivization of the metaphysical-objective and as such stand beneath it. Two things are implied here: a binding of knowledge to the subject and its constitution, and a detachment of the logical from the ontological. It seems as if the former, precisely because it must be connected with the subject or the finite bearer of knowledge, is not capable of fully grasping the latter. From the discrepancy between logisms and ontologisms arises the thing-in-itself in the sense of Crusius. The Wolffian Baumgarten, however, never speaks of this explicitly, and it is doubtful whether he even thought of it; yet the inner logic of his position compels him again and again to emphasize the limits of human knowledge. Even where he speaks of the superiority of purely logical truth over the aesthetic-logical one, he treats the former—inasmuch as it is the true apprehension of the

2599 *Aesthetica*, § 12 (= p. 5).
2600 *op. cit.*, § 8 (= p. 3).
2601 *op. cit.*, §§ 426, 427 (= p. 271).
2602 *op. cit.*, § 424 (= p. 269 f.).

metaphysical-objective—as accessible only to an omniscient being,[2603] and then immediately points to the gulf between what is logically attainable by man and the metaphysical. The former is abstraction, loss of living substance: "Quid enim est abstractio, si iactura non est?[2604]".

If these tendencies at least outwardly remained within the framework of Wolffianism, the direction of thought of a direct student of Baumgarten like Meier showed where they led. For Meier, who barely concealed his alienation from Wolffians like Gottsched,[2605] adopts the Wolffian hierarchy of disciplines and faculties of knowledge only to practically turn it on its head. He admits that the essence of all things consists in mere possibility, but adds that the cognition of this essence, in its abstractness, cannot be perceived:[2606] the more abstract concepts are, the less they contain in themselves.[2607] Abstraction causes imperfection because it obscures representation; it is "in itself something evil".[2608] Meier leaves no doubt as to which he would choose if he had to decide between the abstract knowledge of the possible and the intuitive knowledge of the actual. Even more: according to his view, the doctrine of reason presupposes aesthetics because our first concepts are sensuous,[2609] because confused knowledge precedes clear knowledge.[2610] Thus, the psychological-genetic perspective gains primacy over the logical one.[2611] Meier therefore joins Locke, about whom he was incidentally the first to lecture in Germany;[2612] he asserts the origin of knowledge from the senses[2613] and declares himself also for Bacon's experimental method.[2614] "Lower faculty of knowledge" still refers, for him, to

2603 *op. cit.*, § 557 (= p. 360).
2604 *op. cit.*, § 560 (= p. 363); cf. §§ 562–563 (= p. 364 f.).
2605 Bergmann, *Begründung der deutschen Ästhetik*, 128 ff.
2606 *Anfangsgründe*, § 52 (= I, 91 f.).
2607 *op. cit.*, § 127 (= I, 273).
2608 *op. cit.*, §§ 312, 313 (= I, 114, 115).
2609 *op. cit.*, §§ 5, 15 (= I, 8, 25).
2610 *op. cit.*, § 21 (= I, 34).
2611 *op. cit.*, § 352 (= I, 206). On the place of psychology in Meier's system see Sommer, *Grundzüge*, 50 f.
2612 Zart, *Einfluß der englischen Philosophie*, 82 f.
2613 *Anfangsgründe*, § 339 (= II, 169).
2614 *op. cit.*, §§ 355 ff. (= II, 213 ff.).

sensibility,[2615] which is why aesthetics is called the "logic of the lower cognitive faculties".[2616] This is nevertheless no reason for unconditional capitulation before the "higher faculties of knowledge." Their products, mathematics and metaphysics, Meier finds incurably "ugly",[2617] and since they also, as mentioned, do not appear very rich in content, he hardly perceives it as a loss that sensuous cognition can attain clarity but not the distinctness of the doctrine of reason.[2618] For distinctness forms the exact opposite of beauty, which remains perfect only as long as it remains an indistinct, sensuous cognition.[2619] It is not the clarification of the sensuous, but the sensuous embodiment of the abstract-distinct that constitutes Meier's concern: "higher and more general concepts must always be regarded as parts of more determinate and lower concepts".[2620] He accepts Wolff's distinction between symbolic and intuitive knowledge—only to give preference to the latter.[2621]

All this is intended, of course, to apply only to the domain of aesthetics and only for that; nevertheless, the shift in standpoint is unmistakable. For ontology is simply perceived as irrelevant and treated rather coolly, if not with open irony.[2622] A new spirit blows here, which is also felt in the unmistakably anti-ascetic attitude.[2623] This attitude also shapes Meier's investigations into the nature and effect of the passions, which proceed from the genuinely Enlightenment position[2624] that passions are not passive, as their name suggests, but rather in them the soul shows itself in its full activity.[2625] In Meier, then, anti-intellectualism appears in a very modern secular form; it thus does not derive from religious philosophy of feeling, but

2615 *op. cit.*, § 254 (= II, 4).
2616 *op. cit.*, § 2 (= I, 5).
2617 *op. cit.*, § 121 (= I, 260).
2618 *loc. cit.* (= I, 259).
2619 *op. cit.*, §§ 23, 91 (= I, 38 f., 187 f.).
2620 *op. cit.*, § 128 (= I, 275).
2621 *op. cit.*, § 181 (= I, 429).
2622 e.g., *op. cit.*, § 17 (= I, 29): "A lady is nowhere safer from all danger than when she is in the company of an algebraist and metaphysician."
2623 *op. cit.*, § 22 (= I, 35 ff.).
2624 See above, Chapter VI, Section 3c.
2625 *Von den Gemütsbewegungen*, § 34 = p. 38f.

results from the encounter of a secularly minded Wolffian with the leading Western European current. This is, however, an indirect sign of the secularizing effect of Wolffianism—but also of the fact that precisely because of this effect, Wolffianism as intellectualism could not be long-lived: for the secular mainstream of the age was anti-intellectualist. Meier's approach, which also considerably influenced popular philosophy, at any rate makes clear that the—not very robust—religious philosophy of feeling already had secular anti-intellectualist competitors before *Sturm und Drang*. Thus, *Sturm und Drang* could, in its secularization of religious philosophy of feeling, also draw upon the latter in order to fuse the two directions together.

b) The Anti-Intellectualist Impact of Religious Currents and the Wolffian-Inspired Reform Theology. Oppositions and Points of Contact

Even more important than the philosophical critique of Wolffian intellectualism for the prehistory of the dominant current of the German late Enlightenment was the militant anti-intellectualism of religiously oriented philosophy of feeling or existence, although, as already stated, one must be careful not to derive the former entirely from the latter. The religious philosophy of feeling or existence, which appeared in Germany mainly in the form of Pietism, was in fact a European phenomenon (which is why European, and specifically Catholic-mystical, influences on the new Protestant religiosity were not absent),[2626] which largely shared the intellectual fate of the Enlightenment as a whole.[2627] This was due, of course, to the character of Enlightenment rationalism, which, as we know, could indeed be reconciled with such tendencies, and also to the fact that in both there was a strong desire to put an end to the age of religious wars and at the same time to the established Christianity, seemingly responsible for them, in its theological rigidity.[2628] A major demand in Spener's *Pia desideria* was the abolition of theological disputes and the turn away

2626 Wieser, *Der sentimentale Mensch*, 77ff., 117f., on Fénelon and his influence, 88ff., 289ff., 297ff. Cf. Schmidt, *Pietismus*, 26f.
2627 Gusdorf, *Dieu*, 58ff.; on Dutch Pietism and its immediate effects in northern German regions see Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, I, 101ff., 367ff.
2628 Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum*, 36ff.; Schmidt, *Pietismus*, 40, 85; Holl, *Bedeutung der großen Kriege*, 12f., 19ff., 29ff., 39, 43ff.

from dead theological knowledge toward concrete, Christian-enlightened practice. The ideal was the harmonious community of believers, based on immediately evident metaphysical and ethical insights.[2629] Spirit and letter of Scripture were thus distinguished—and if an exegetical principle of the Reformation (that of the *sensus litteralis sive historicus*)[2630] seemed to be denied by this, Pietism could on the other hand appeal to Luther in important points.[2631] Because of its general reforming intention, Pietism could also be interpreted in a socially revolutionary sense, especially since the memory of the Anabaptists had not faded.[2632] However, we must here set aside nuances in order to hold fast to the essential for our question: it is clear that the religious philosophy of feeling had aims that overlapped in central points with those of the intellectually oriented new religious movements. The representatives of natural or rational religion in the 17th century also wanted to present that commonly comprehensible denominator that would render bloody conflicts over the interpretation of the letter superfluous and provide a generally acceptable condensation of the true spirit of Christianity. The intellectual and the feeling-oriented currents within the emerging enlightened religion are thus initially allied in the struggle against "bad" Christianity. If we want to take the broad intellectual-historical view, we may state the thesis that between the two, regarding their common opponent, there existed the same (fragile) unity as between the mathematical-intellectualistic and the empiricist rejection of the traditional worldview.

This analogy can be completed by noting that the relations between the aforementioned religious tendencies followed the same course at the same time as those between mathematical and empiricist methodology within Enlightenment natural science and philosophy in general: to the initial alliance succeeded open enmity once the common opponent had disappeared from view. Structurally, natural or rational religion, based on a priori definable constants, corresponds to the mathematical model

2629 Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, II, 125ff.; Hirsch, *Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie*, II, 92, 112, 173ff.

2630 Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 8f.

2631 Schmidt, *Pietismus*, 16ff.

2632 *op. cit.*, 123ff., esp. 130ff.; cf. Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, I, 401.

of nature, while currents such as Pietism represent a radical empiricism, that is, the rejection of any abstract generality and the principled attachment to the concrete individual or individual experience. From the perspective of Pietism as well as from that of radical Enlightenment empiricism, the equation *Intellectualism = Scholastic Syllogistics* is more or less self-evident.[2633] Rational religion thus appears as the continuation of cold scholasticism, just as mathematical deductive method appeared to the empiricist Enlighteners. This is connected with the judgment that the intellect is incapable of grasping the true spirit of Christianity, and that, despite Enlightenment intentions, it could only give rise to new uncertainties and disputes and thus indirectly foster atheism. Against the arrogance of the intellect, the humble empirical science was considered the surest antidote.[2634]

In order to understand these accusations, we must recall the particular situation at that time in the field of exegesis. As is well known, the exegetical question had been brought to the forefront by the Reformation, which saw in direct interpretation of the Bible—an intellectual act free from tradition and authority and at least implicitly directed against them—the gateway to the intensity of true faith.[2635] The Protestant exegetical approach was further promoted by the gradual advance of the rationalist worldview in two respects. On the one hand, the anti-authoritarian (specifically: anti-Catholic and anti-scholastic) interpretation of the Bible appeared to be an act of reason in the sense of the new spirit of freedom, especially since it had the same adversary. On the other hand, the new exegetical attitude suited the situation marked by the collapse of the traditional worldview; it was now an exceedingly thankless task to seek in the Bible the supports for a cosmology that, within a complete intellectual system like Thomism, would have had an undisputed place. By viewing the Bible as a source of edification or as a starting point or orientation framework for the discovery of true personal religiosity, the newer natural science

2633 On the decline of scholasticism, which became noticeable precisely at the time of Pietism's emergence, see Wundt, *Deutsche Schulmetaphysik*, 152ff., and Petersen, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie*, 324ff.

2634 Hirsch, *Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie*, II, 104f., 94ff.

2635 Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 5ff.

remained practically unchallenged in its domain, which was generally welcomed as a pleasing rapprochement and mutual supplementation of both fields, despite much resistance from conservative Protestants who saw in the progress of natural science a threat to religion itself.[2636] However, the practical result of the Protestant exegetical approach was the fragmentation of the Reformation movement into a multitude of more or less hostile sects, each insisting on the exclusive correctness of its own interpretation of the Bible. The common struggle against Catholicism was not enough to preserve Protestant unity, and in addition, the prophecies of the Counter-Reformers seemed to be confirmed, that the new movement would destroy the Church as such. The fervent interpretation and criticism of the Bible triggered endless disputations that inevitably recalled scholasticism: the autonomous *ratio* in theology led to anarchy and chaos, as Bayle at the time skeptically observed. As a reaction to this state (which appeared to be the product of the new theological intellectualism, just as the religious wars were interpreted as the consequence of the old), as well as to the systematic theological development of Lutheran orthodoxy,[2637] arose the religious appeal to the certainty of feeling and of the heart—where it soon became clear that the concrete and substantive interpretation of the latter would provoke at least as many divisions and controversies.

The Pietist version of the essence of the Enlightenment[2638] corresponded to the objective situation in the decisive respect that Enlightenment rationalism in general did not require a confession to the primacy of the intellect—rather the opposite was the case. If the rational primarily meant the natural-existential, and heart and reason

2636 *op. cit.*, 66ff.

2637 *op. cit.*, 28ff.

2638 Of course, the Pietists themselves did not perceive their problems as problems of the (only just emerging) Enlightenment – incidentally, a term that appears much later (Stuke, *Aufklärung*, 247ff.). The objective commonalities can only be established through retrospective ideal-typical analysis. However, the semasiological relation between the words "Aufklärung", "Lumières", "Enlightenment" and expressions such as *lumen* (natural or divine), "Erleuchtung", etc., is not purely coincidental. The Pietists also made extensive use of the metaphor of light (Langen, *Wortschatz*, 44, 45, 250, 377, 416, 476).

under certain (substantive) conditions were indistinguishable from one another, then Pietism could describe itself as the "true" Enlightenment, just as the non-religious currents of philosophy of feeling of that time did. Here as there, Enlightenment was seen not least in the radicalization of empiricism by the elimination of all mediating intellectual instances: thus empiricism became a faith in the reality of what is grasped or given in absolute immediacy or intuition. It thus refers primarily to inner experience as the most immediate. The reality of its contents is believed in from this empiricist perspective just as absolutely as the truth of sense perceptions (not coincidentally, later philosophers of feeling connected their position with "total realism" in epistemology).[2639] The "I" thus moves into the foreground, the contemplation of the world becomes self-contemplation, and thus existential intensity reaches a peak.

And since religious experience is felt as the core of inner experience altogether, the exploration of the "I" is identified with the exploration of the ways of God. Only within the absolute immediacy of inner experience is God alive and tangible. He becomes, strangely, the highest stage of the elevation of the self, which thus experiences its true possibilities precisely at the moment in which it forgets itself entirely and becomes one with the object of its experience (itself and God)—which represents, properly speaking, the *non plus ultra* and at the same time the irreplaceable gain of empiricist knowledge, i.e., knowledge attained through the complete exclusion of the abstractions of the intellect.

The soul savors the living spirit in an almost sensuous way, it enjoys God and itself in contact with Him. Characteristically, the vocabulary of Pietism significantly shaped the language usage of the Goethe era. Expressions such as "Gottesgenuß" (where the verb "genießen" carries the double meaning of "participation" and "appropriation") or the phrases relating to communion like "tasting God," "eating God," "drinking God" often appeared in literature, as did formulations in which enlightened intellectual activity—in connection with Spinoza's *summo bono frui*, *vita rationali frui*, etc.—is linked to existentially deeply felt enjoyment and contrasted with merely reflective thinking.[2640]

2639 So Jacobi and Hemsterhuis, see Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 131, 143ff.

2640 Langen, *Wortschatz*, 248ff., 296ff.; Binder, *'Genuss'*, 72ff.

The extent of the sensualization of Christ and the forms of his worship among the Pietists around Zinzendorf are well known.[2641]

The sensualization and enjoyment of the spiritual within existential intensity compensates for the deprivations demanded by the traditional moral code. Thus, asceticism itself acquires a decidedly anti-ascetic aspect, and nothing stands in the way of the free development of the subject. According to the Pietist understanding, although the human being remains a willless plaything in the hands of God,[2642] in reality, Pietist self-denial is the redirection of one's own actions, invoking the omnipotent will of God. By interpreting his behavior as if he had acted in self-denial, the Pietist transforms the theoretical willlessness into action and decisiveness. The Calvinist self-awareness even experiences a heightened sense in the Pietist drive, though on the other hand, it seems to diminish due to the inner fragmentation that Pietist sentimentalism brings. However, this fragmentation is often elevated to a pious exercise and theoretical motif, which is taken no more seriously than the feeling of futility in practice.[2643] Ultimately, Pietist anti-intellectualism aims at the emancipation of the forces of the self, and in this, whether consciously or not, it shows its connection with general Enlightenment intentions. Its aim is also Enlightenment in that it seeks the elimination of intellectual mediating instances or limits in the development of psychic sensibility through the removal of those limits that the intellectualist attitude imposes on practical activity. For the Pietists, as for most Enlighteners, intellectualism—if it seeks to manifest practically—is seen as foreign to reality, marked by the prioritization and following of sterile speculative principles: it thus separates knowledge from life, theology from religion. In contrast, the concrete care for the neighbor, the proof of faith through good works, the practical orientation of education, and the fraternity within the community of believers are now placed in opposition.[2644] The dynamization of inner life goes

2641 Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, III, 404ff.; Schmidt, *Pietismus*, 93ff.; Langen, *Wortschatz*, 289f.
2642 *op. cit.*, 210ff.
2643 Günther, *Psychologie des Pietismus*, 163ff.
2644 About Francke's practical activity in this sense and its significance for shaping the Prussian character, see Schmidt, *Pietismus*, 76ff., 143.

hand in hand with that of outer life, and it is seen as incompatible with all manifestations of intellectualism, from syllogistics and Latin to theologically flawless but "cold" preaching.[2645]

In this context, where the primary focus is on the ideal-typical development of conceptual structures, the distortions and mitigations of the Pietist fundamental position are of particular interest, as they arose from various arrangements, sometimes aligning with Orthodoxy and sometimes with rationalist (intellectualist) theological interpretations. This frequently occurred, as expected, since Pietism shared a common aspect with rational religion and, from its own perspective, shared the Orthodox mistrust of the latter. When choosing their respective allies, the local power structure and intellectual climate were decisive factors, and their differences from place to place had already led to the diversity of manifestations of the Pietist movement in different regions of Germany.[2646] Nevertheless, the split of the radical wing under Zinzendorf showed that the willingness to adapt was not unlimited, and the original spirit of the movement remained, to a certain extent, alive and capable of renewal. Of importance for the intellectual life of the German late Enlightenment was, among other things, the radical Pietists' return to thinkers like J. Böhme, as well as their tendency toward pantheistic constructions, which, through the Kabbalah, brought them closer to Spinoza.[2647] However, these were marginal phenomena—sometimes signs of dissolution. Be that as it may, although Pietism as an ideology and movement had significantly weakened when the rise of Wolffianism began, it nevertheless made a substantial contribution to combating the intellectualist current. Its direct confrontation with it was inevitable, since a number of theologians were striving to apply Wolff's philosophical principles to their own discipline and thus "initiated the so-called Neology".[2648]

2645 About the Pietistic turn away from the artifices of Baroque rhetoric, see Sperber, *Einfluß des Pietismus auf die Sprache*, 500ff.; about the new style in preaching, see Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum*, 86ff., and Holl, *Bedeutung der großen Kriege*, 55ff.

2646 Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, II, 249f., 256, 424ff., 497ff.; Hirsch, *Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie*, II, 394ff.

2647 *op. cit.*, II, 226ff., 307ff.

2648 Ludovici, *Historie der Wolffischen Philosophie*, I, 166ff.; Aner, *Theologie der Lessingzeit*, 144; Barth, *Protestantische Theologie*, 135ff. (cf. the qualifying remark on p. 142).

Formally, this effort consisted of the deductive-apodictic formulation of religious truths, and substantively, it more or less adhered to Wolff's theses, such as that revelation must not contradict reason, although it might surpass it, and that God himself is bound to (moral) reason or that moral truths could exist independently of God and form the basis of a natural religion.[2649] It was therefore to be expected that Wolffianism would directly or indirectly pave the way for Western European deism in Germany.[2650] However, its impact on theology did not, and has not, been limited to that. Whether and in what sense Gottsched can be regarded as the first Neologist[2651] remains an open question. In the broader intellectual-historical perspective, someone like S. Baumgarten (a brother of the aesthete) seems to be the more typical figure, precisely because he sought to be both a continuation of the (moderate) Pietist tradition of Halle and a loyal student of Wolff.[2652] The objective points of contact between Pietism and intellectualist reform theology are clearly expressed in this endeavor of Baumgarten's. However, one could not go very far in this direction. For Baumgarten, like Neology in general, had to adopt Wolff's principle of the subordination of the will to reason:[2653] this forms their intellectualism, which applies both to humans and to God, as on both levels, the primacy of reason (which, in its separation from the will, is precisely intellect) is asserted.

The Wolffian theologians, however, did not want to replace God with reason; from a Pietist perspective, this was nonetheless secondary. If God becomes more or less a factotum of reason, the once vibrant interlocutor—the one whom the self encountered during its

2649 Hirsch, *Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie*, II, 76ff., 83ff.
2650 Indirectly through S. Baumgarten's distinction between atheism and deism, with fundamentally favorable treatment of the latter (Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum*, 98ff., 112ff.); directly through the work of Lüdke, the translator of Tindal (Lechler, *Englischer Deismus*, 447ff.). Aner's claim that Neology differs from Deism by not rejecting revelation (*Theologie der Lessingzeit*, 180) is misleading, since not all Deists rejected revelation, but demanded its subordination to reason — which is also the decisive point. Nevertheless, Aner himself admits that Neologists like Lüdke arrived at a "rationalistic version of the content of revelation" (354).
2651 Thus in *op. cit.*, 195ff.
2652 Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum*, 80, 103.
2653 Hirsch, *Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie*, II, 374ff.

journey through its own labyrinths and from whom it expected a final answer to its most personal questions—fades away. A God who speaks the language of reason addresses everyone simultaneously and thus becomes impersonal. His commandments are universally understandable; they must therefore be registered by the intellect, i.e., the faculty of the impersonal-general, and no longer emerge from enlightenment or existential intensity. Insight into God's will no longer requires elevation or a passionate engagement of the psychic sensibility. In short, a God who is identical with reason can only issue general, i.e., abstract commandments, and thus only affect the intellect. This voice of God therefore means the suppression of the most living and individual aspect, namely, inner experience—just as the concrete qualities of nature are transmuted by mathematical formulas. Furthermore, the Neologian efforts to remove everything from religion and theology that was considered superstition by the Pietists led to the same undervaluation and abuse of psychic sensibility: nothing remained except reasoned commandments, nothing that could touch the soul or set it in motion. The rationalist (intellectualist) current in theology sought to subject both God and humanity to the dominion of the abstract. The reaction against this was significant—and we must interpret it as a symptom of the broader Enlightenment anti-intellectualism in order to understand it in this intellectual-historical context. For the Pietists were by no means alone in this. Not only did they sometimes form a common front with Orthodoxy against the Neologians, but also the peculiar alignment of thinkers like Lessing with Orthodoxy did not primarily support the merits of the latter, but rather the anti-intellectualist-emancipatory aspect that Orthodoxy seemed to share with Pietism as a representative of immediate religious experience.[2654] The particular strength of religious philosophy of feeling in Germany enabled such combinations. It symbolically shows in the fact that fanaticism and superstition are not fundamentally identified here; rather, it expresses the tendency to positively assess fanaticism—in the anti-intellectualist sense of genuine religious enthusiasm and elevation.[2655]

2654 See below, Section 3h. The early relations between Hegel and Hölderlin and the orthodox theology of Storr show how current this constellation still was in the 1790s (Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 170ff.).

2655 Conze-Reinhart, *Fanatismus*, 312ff.; cf. Sperber, *Einfluß des Pietismus auf*

Sin and atonement, or deeper self-knowledge, form, according to the Pietist view, the two poles around which the soul's life of the religious-moral human revolves with ever-increasing intensity. This is a crucial point for understanding the background of the controversy between the Pietists (and Orthodox) on one side and the Neologians on the other. The former insist on the doctrine of original sin because, in the experience of guilt and in the suffering of atonement and redemption, they see the indispensable means for achieving existential intensity in religious experience. The exaltation of psychic sensibility, or suffering, in all its variety—from despair and repentance to suffering and gratitude—explains what might be called the Pietist joy in sin. The radical empiricism of this viewpoint is further revealed by pointing to the often unconscious influence of the mathematical-deductive in the thinking of the Neologians, who, however, had largely distanced themselves from the narrow mathematicalism of Wolff and had often imbued their position with a vitality, thanks to their appeal to reason and human dignity, that, though markedly different from the Pietist one, was no less significant for many.[2656] The deductive, or the prioritization of the general, remains unmistakable in their way of thinking, as shown by their rejection of the doctrine of original sin when we consider it structurally: the transformation of man through the Fall from an image of God into a wretched mortal is viewed by the rational religion perspective as just as much a disturbance as miracles or chance events are seen from a scientific perspective. When the Neologians downplay or obscure original sin (criticism of Augustine and a sympathetic treatment of Pelagianism gained considerable ground in their circles),[2657] they are left with the image of a constant and calculable human nature, which could easily be connected with the equally unchanging principles of reason. Also, with regard to the creation of an instance that would serve as the embodiment of the rational and thus as the starting point for the deductive discovery of individual moral norms, the Neologians

die Sprache, 514.

2656 To conclude from this that Neology was not intellectualistic, as Aner does (*Theologie der Lessingzeit*, 151), means confusing motivation and structure of thought. As mentioned, its intellectualism is grounded in Wolff's primacy of reason over will.

2657 *op. cit*., 158ff., cf. 329.

addressed social and cultural sensibility.[2658] They detached the essence of Christianity from its historical manifestations (or from all its sins) and projected the ideal of rational religion into primeval Christianity, with motives such as the Enlightenment search for the uncorrupted nature playing a role. In following this path, the Neologians, like all intellectualists of the century, were not least aware of the suspicion of nihilism. It was striking that the Orthodox and Pietists largely shared the anthropology of pessimists and skeptics, and their thesis that religion is a product of passion, not reason, although they drew fundamentally different conclusions from it. The reservations of the Neologians against their religious opponents are thus also a mistrust of the moral orientation power of inner sensibility, which is not dispelled by any ecstatic belief. In this constellation, we recognize the general features of the moral-philosophical debate of the century.

The negative agreement between religious philosophy of feeling and contemporary skepticism regarding the rehabilitation of psychic sensibility is emphatically expressed in Hamann's work. He summarizes the results of his still-young engagement with Hume in two points. First: "The final fruit of all worldly wisdom is the observation of human ignorance and weakness"; for Hamann, this is the "cornerstone" of his thought and simultaneously "a millstone that shatters all his [Hume's] sophistries." From the perspective of Hamann's fundamental attitude, the impotence of the intellect is only compatible with religion, but it is also compatible with potentially atheistic skepticism—though only if the certainty of salvation and the God-given meaning of the world are assumed. Second, Hamann agrees with Hume's thesis that true religion stands and falls with belief in miracles; "Hume may have said this with a mocking or profound expression: but in any case, this is Orthodox and a testimony to the truth from the mouth of an enemy and persecutor of it".[2659] As so often in the Enlightenment, intellectual structures are adopted here

2658 Following the trend of the century, even the Neologists engage in historical studies (notably the more moderate among them); however, they prefer interpreting already published sources to discovering new ones. Their tendency toward secularization in historiography (excluding miracles, etc.) is paired with Enlightenment self-satisfaction over earlier times (*op. cit.*, 331ff.).
2659 Letter to Lindner, July 3, 1759 = *Briefwechsel*, I, 355f.

with a reversal of signs (this arbitrary reversal was upheld by those who did not, or at least not completely, wish to abandon the intellect),[2660] with the difference in basic attitudes making the agreement on the facts appear relatively unimportant; in other words, the facts are entirely shaped by the fundamental attitude. In Hume, Hamann finds the philosophically executed confirmation of the position represented by Pietism and secular-sensualistic currents, that suffering is the true motor of spiritual life itself, or the voice of nature or God in man.[2661] This conviction is repeated and concisely formulated in *Aesthetica in nuce*: "A philosopher ... establishes monastic laws—only suffering gives abstractions such as hypotheses hands, feet, wings, etc.[2662]"; "Nature works through senses and passions. Who mutilates her tools, how can he feel?[2663]". The emergence of sin from passion is no argument against the life-essential, even elevating function of the latter: "If the passions are members of dishonor, do they thereby cease to be weapons of manliness?".[2664] Just as the "natural use of the senses differs from the unnatural realm of abstractions," so too is logic distinguished from existential certainty, i.e., from faith: "What one believes, therefore, does not necessarily need to be proven, and a proposition can be proven as incontrovertible without being believed ... Faith is not an act of reason and can therefore be impervious to any attack by it".[2665]

Behind the separation of faith and reason lies the intention to make the former invulnerable, and for this purpose, the limitations of the latter are pointed out. The intellect is powerless because it is powerless against God: and it is so because God's essence does not consist in the intellect. A God = intellect would, according to Hamann, be as distant from the world and from mankind as the abstraction of

2660 See above, Chapter VI, Section 3b.

2661 Unger, *Hamann*, I, 139ff. Unger also connects Hamann's rehabilitation of sensibility with his personality traits.

2662 SW, II, 208.

2663 *loc. cit.*, 206.

2664 *loc. cit.*, 208.

2665 *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*, SW, II, 73f.
On Hamann's partly justified, partly arbitrary transformation of Hume's epistemological doctrine of "belief" into a justification of religious faith, see Swain, *Hamann and the Philosophy of Hume*, esp. 347ff.; cf. Metzke, *Hamanns Stellung*, 75ff.

concrete existence. The meaning of the predominance of the deeper dimensions of existence in humans thus emerges in a new light. The intellect can never gain the upper hand or uncover the mysteries of existence in it, because humans live in nature and history, which are themselves permeated by God.[2666] The Enlightenment's[2667] rooting of human existence in nature and history is rediscovered by Hamann in a religious sense, and since God is present in these, they serve, in all their anti-intellectualist consequence, for the human approach to God: "As nature has given us eyes to open, so history has given us ears. To dissect a body and an event down to their first elements means to attempt to capture God's unfathomable essence, his eternal power and divinity[2668]." The connection of the existential intensity of the *I* that merges with God with the contemplation of nature in its concreteness (= divinity) understandably brings Hamann close to the natural science empiricism, to which the mathematical method must remain foreign for worldly reasons, i.e., out of awe for the miracle of the concrete. The great representative of this direction in natural science, according to Hamann, was Bacon ("my Euthyphron"), who is frequently mentioned and cited.[2669] The mathematical methodology "has been the source of countless errors and subtleties",[2670] and its spread in Germany is thus viewed as harmful.[2671] Hamann also wants history to be treated just as empirically as nature: "I am surprised that no one has yet ventured as much in history as Bacon did for physics.[2672]" Such a historical

2666 On the descent of God as the foundation of Hamann's understanding of nature and history, see the excellent analysis by Gründer, *Figur und Geschichte*, 21ff., 78ff., 85ff., 91f.

2667 The Enlightenment origin of this view must be particularly emphasized here, since Hamann is usually portrayed as the great opponent of "the" Enlightenment (if not completely, then only regarding his ideas of tolerance or free religiosity — thus concerning purely normative positions, e.g., Alexander, *Hamann*, 198f.: this is correct but insufficient). Both older and newer literature on Hamann generally uses the false conception of a supposedly intellectualistic Enlightenment as the yardstick for judging Hamann's achievement.

2668 *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*, SW, II, 64.

2669 *Aesthetica in nuce*, SW, II, 197 note 3, cf. 206.

2670 *Über Descartes*, SW, IV, 223.

2671 *Versuch über eine akademische Frage*, SW, II, 124.

2672 *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten*, SW, II, 65.

approach would be a continuation or complement of that natural science, which understands nature and humanity as a "sensuous revelation" of divine sovereignty:[2673] for the "book of creation" and the "books of the covenant" serve the same function.[2674] The essence of history is revelation, and the history book par excellence is the Bible, since it narrates all stages and phases of revelation, culminating in the appearance of Christ.[2675]

In this context, we will not pursue Hamann's Christocentric view of history any further, but instead point once again to the logical connection between his anti-intellectualism and the thesis of the human being's rooting in history.[2676] The human being is affected by history, that is, by revelation and tradition, because and insofar as he is nature, i.e., a sensuous being that connects with the world through senses and passions. In the face of this not only necessary but also fruitful rooting, which corresponds to the essence of human beings, no talk of pure reason can be had: "The stamina and menstruation of our reason are, therefore, in the truest sense, revelations and traditions, which we take as our own, transform into our juices and forces, and thus make us achieve our destiny".[2677] This ceaseless conversation with nature and history, or revelation (an ultimately unavoidable conversation, since humanity is nature and history and, as the image of God, seeks God in them), sets the fundamental aspects of existence in motion and leads to the fulfillment of human destiny. The path is personal, that is, it opens only through the highest intensification of inner experience and innate forces. But it is not lonely, since the very existential intensity of the self leads to insight into the original intertwining of the self with God and the world, or with others: "God

2673 *Aesthetica in nuce*, SW, II, 198.
2674 *loc. cit.*, 204.
2675 *loc. cit.*, 213.
2676 On Hamann's extensive and content-rich concept of reality, which is connected to this thesis, see Metzke, *Hamanns Stellung*, 78ff.
On the different forms of "abstractions" against which this concept of reality is directed, see Alexander, *Hamann*, 71–119.
2677 *Philologische Einfälle*, SW, III, 39.
On Hamann's epistemological critique of Kant in connection with his philosophy of language, see Simon, *Vernunft und Autorschaft*, esp. 147ff., 158ff., and Baudler, *Im Worte sehen*, 179ff.

and my neighbor thus belong to my self-knowledge, to my self-love".[2678] The lived uniqueness of the personal situation is thus only the reverse and, in a certain sense, also the precondition of the dedication to the ontologically kinship on all levels. Therefore, Hamann sees his position as the guarantee for the preservation of the ("true") autonomy of the person. The ideal of autonomy, which is shaped with regard to the intellectual activity of the individual, actually arises, like every abstraction, from empty arrogance, because it disregards the metaphysical bond of the human being, which is simultaneously a bond with nature and history. Against Kant, who sought to free humanity from its self-imposed immaturity (which for Hamann is a *contradictio in se*, since "inability is no fault") and thus "counts himself among the guardians, and wants to give himself esteem over immature readers," Hamann claims that "true Enlightenment consists in the emergence of the immature human from a most self-imposed guardianship. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," because it is also the beginning of self-knowledge and self-love in the above sense. "The public use of reason and freedom is nothing but a night watch, a lustful night watch. The private use is the daily bread,[2679]" because autonomy is shaped in the silent and patient inner struggle, fully utilizing the self rooted in nature and history. Since autonomy means existential fulfillment in God's presence, its worst enemy is the belief that it can be achieved through clearly formulated universal principles or the exercise of reason. Principles and rights are inherently abstract, that is, they lie beyond the concrete human being and actually arise from the transference of the attitude that generates the abstract concept of God to morality and politics. Just as the purely human moral intent, which dries up the sources of existential intensity through detachment from God or from nature and revelation, the abstract God is a product of the intellect, which seeks to bind him to its own principles. As Hamann writes with respect to the Neologians: "The object of your considerations and devotion is not God, but a mere image-word, like your general human reason, which you, through more than poetic license, deify into a real person, etc.[2680]"

2678 *Brocken*, SW, I, 302.
2679 Letter to Kraus from December 18, 1784 = *Briefwechsel*, V, 291f.
2680 *Neue Apologie*, SW, III, 106.

3. The Monistic Approach of the German Late Enlightenment

a) The Rediscovery of Leibniz in its Interconnection with Shaftesbury's and Spinoza's Influence

Just as the religious philosophy of feeling adopted key motifs of skepticism with reversed signs, so too did the German late Enlightenment consciously or unconsciously (sometimes even within the framework of a rejection of Pietism, etc.) appropriate thought structures from the religious philosophy of feeling, which served as building blocks for a system of thought based on various ideological foundations. The motif of existential intensity or autonomy, as the development of metaphysically rooted forces, almost became a commonplace. Goethe, recalling the influence of Hamann's writings on the generation growing up around 1770, believes its essence can be summarized in the following maxim: "Everything that man attempts to accomplish ... must spring from all united forces".[2681] The pessimistic anthropology, or the doctrine of original sin, was nevertheless firmly rejected. While for the Pietists and Hamann, it had fostered the mobilization of psychic sensibility, it simultaneously harmed the demand for anti-ascetic morality, which, despite social prudery or fear of immorality, was unmistakable, and it also led to a neglect of the purely socio-historical dimension. Even when, as in the case of Hamann, revelation was expressed in terms of history as a whole, it was more in terms of the constant confrontation of the sinful and struggling individual with the sensualized revelation, rather than the concrete activity of entire nations in space and time.[2682] Biological

2681 *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, XII = SW 24, 81.

2682 That certainly does not mean that the influences of salvation-historical theology on the philosophy of history of the German late Enlightenment were minor. Kaiser has impressively shown that organicist motifs and expressions (growth, wholeness, etc.) of the mystical-pietist tradition continued to live on in, for example, Herder, and that beyond that, this tradition possessed a

and socio-historical sensibility were often overlooked in this perspective, which, in light of the battle against nihilism through an all-encompassing and optimistic metaphysics, had to create significant difficulties. To lead to final victory and not merely renew old controversies between theologians and atheists, the fight against skepticism and nihilism had to be fought with the most modern weapons. In other words, the Enlightenment's rehabilitation of sensibility had to be fully embraced on all levels, for the new metaphysics had to not only encompass the realms of being but also incorporate and process the domains and advances of contemporary science. And it had to be comprehensive in this dual respect, but also emancipatory and anti-ascetic in the modern sense, if it was not to be dismissed as a reaction of conventional shaping or as a narrow contraction of the intellectual horizon for the sake of preserving moral values.

As for the prevailing anthropological attitude in the German late Enlightenment, it did not arise from the mere encounter of the insights of religious philosophy of feeling with the dynamic of inner life, combined with the Neologians' rejection of the doctrine of original sin, although both had a complementary effect. Indirect influences should not be underestimated, even if they stem from overall positions that were more often contested than followed—such as the religious philosophy of feeling because of its pessimistic aspects, and Neology because of its intellectualism. The fruitful moments[2683] in the sense of

considerable aspect of state theory and nationalism (*Pietismus und Patriotismus*, esp. 32 ff., 70 ff., 139 ff., 160 ff.). In regard to Lessing's and Herder's philosophies of history, however, the role of their engagement with sociology and historical science of the Western European Enlightenment must also be considered. The ideas of salvation-historical theology are mobilized here in order to neutralize the skeptical consequences of the unreserved rehabilitation of social-historical sensibility — but this rehabilitation is nevertheless taken seriously and acts, both positively and negatively, as an autonomous catalyst of historical-philosophical thinking (cf. below note 286).

2683 In Klopstock, as a representative figure of the transitional period around 1750, we find a kind of guiding mixture or accentuation of elements that flow into the German late Enlightenment: here Neology and rational religion intersect with Pietism as well as the Christian conception of God with a harmonious worldview of Leibnizian inspiration, in which even slight pantheistic nuances become noticeable, while at the same time the feeling of

the new direction are now integrated into a whole, which, however, stands as a coherent expression of a unified basic attitude and not merely as the sum of the mentioned moments, which were dispersed in various previous currents. This process was significantly facilitated by the presence of intellectually developed Western European models, which largely met the new needs; these models did not create the needs, as sometimes appears from the perspective of the philologist, but helped articulate them, thereby strengthening them, making them intellectually relevant, and enabling independent development. These primarily included the writings of Shaftesbury and Rousseau. The details of this influence and the statements of leading representatives of the German late Enlightenment about Shaftesbury and Rousseau are well-known enough and need not be retold here.[2684] From the perspective of our inquiry, it is important to highlight[2685] that both Shaftesbury and Rousseau connected a fundamentally optimistic anthropology with a high regard for inner experience and psychic sensibility, while simultaneously embracing a joyful, anti-ascetic attitude—a combination that surpassed both religious philosophy of feeling and Neology in one stroke. If Shaftesbury's influence is generally considered deeper and more significant, it is because these motifs emerged within a well-defined metaphysical framework. The connection between the optimistic anthropology and the corresponding ontology pointed the way to how nihilism could be defeated. Particularly remarkable, therefore, is the intellectual and temporal parallel between Shaftesbury's influence and the rediscovery of Leibniz,[2686] leading to the following constellation: by merging

sin recedes behind a feeling of elevation or of nature. See Kaiser, *Klopstock*, chap. II and III, pp. 28 ff., 123 ff., as well as Murat, *Klopstock*, 98 ff., 117 ff., 223 ff. Cf. Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum*, 177 f.

2684 Mornet, *Influence de Rousseau*, 59 ff.; Benrubi, *Rousseau et le mouvement philosophique*, 99 ff.; Buck, *Rousseau und die deutsche Romantik*, 4 ff.; Süßenberger, *Rousseau im Urteil der deutschen Publizistik*, esp. 85 ff.; Trousson, *Rousseau dans la presse périodique*, passim; Guthke, *Zur Frühgeschichte des Rousseauismus*, esp. 391 ff.

2685 The shared points of Shaftesbury and Rousseau, which also explain their common influence, are worked out by Schlegel (*Shaftesbury and the French Deists*, 99–129). On the influence of Shaftesbury as treated in older scholarship, see Walzel, *Shaftesbury und das deutsche Geistesleben*, esp. 420 f., 427 f.

2686 This becomes noticeable in the press after 1760. In 1763, the *Theodicy*

Shaftesbury's ontology with that of Leibniz, thus making it significantly more refined and convincing in philosophical terms, it simultaneously deepens the metaphysical foundation of the optimistic anthropology that Shaftesbury primarily represented, making Leibniz's Christian-traditional aspect of anthropology (and morality) ultimately irrelevant. In other words, since Leibniz provides conceptual means for the metaphysical underpinning of the optimistic anthropology, he does not need to be explicitly corrected in moral-anthropological terms by Shaftesbury. Thus, Leibniz is more effortlessly received, and in his fusion with Shaftesbury, he contributes all the more strongly to the formation of the intellectual world of the German late Enlightenment. The foundation of this fusion, however, was not the commonality of both thinkers in their treatment of individual questions in technical-philosophical terms, but rather their radically optimistic and unifying, or monistic, basic attitude—which once again highlights the priority of the "attitude" factor in the thinking style of those who undertook this fusion.

The enthusiasm for Rousseau, however, was primarily focused on the normative content of his concept of nature in general, with Rousseau's educational concerns, which for some were his decisive advantage, particularly highlighting the strong connection between the concept of nature and the concept of man. The normative-optimistic aspect of the former was easily transferred to the latter, ultimately resulting in an ontological-anthropological blend that seamlessly fit into the worldview shaped by Leibniz and Shaftesbury. Rousseau is emancipatory in two senses. The image of man, as he emerges from the hands of nature, suggests the elimination of any convention and tradition, i.e., any kind of binding;[2687] and the legend surrounding

appeared in Gottsched's edition (already followed in 1771 by Beck's edition); in 1765, Raspe published the *Nouveaux Essais* for the first time; and in 1768, Dutens published a six-volume edition of Leibniz's *Gesammelte Schriften*. The complete (three-volume) German edition of Shaftesbury's works appeared between 1776 and 1779; for the bibliography of German translations see Weiser, *Shaftesbury*, 557 ff. Particularly interesting for our context (cf. above, note 184) is the fact that Oetinger also emerged as a translator of Shaftesbury and attempted a theological interpretation of the Englishman.

2687 Therefore, the reaction against Rousseau — not just intellectual but also (petty) bourgeois — was often quite harsh. One of its weapons was the reference to Rousseau's unpredictable character, which could easily be

Rousseau's person, on the other hand, served to create new role models for individual behavior, which particularly had a practical influence on the younger generation.[2688] However, the enthusiasm for Rousseau's work and personality was not so strong or blind as to overlook those aspects of his thinking that were incompatible with the goals of the German late Enlightenment. What was perceived as Rousseau's hostility to culture was openly and consistently rejected from the outset.[2689] Shaftesbury's influence, in this regard, was deeper, as his belief in the natural sociability of humans and in society as the natural and irreplaceable space for the unfolding of individual powers was far more attractive than Rousseau's condemnation of the arts and sciences.[2690] This attitude toward the cultural whole, which, incidentally, aligned perfectly with the general Enlightenment approach, decisively shaped the intellectual character of the German late Enlightenment. The unreserved rehabilitation of socio-historical sensibility within a metaphysical framework made the philosophy of history an indispensable component of the emerging monistic worldview—a process that reached its great peaks in Lessing and Herder, before Hegel.

portrayed as madness (Süßenberger, *Rousseau im Urteil der deutschen Publizistik*, 205 ff.). The most loyal Rousseau enthusiasts were understandably to be found in circles of the still young — and largely youthful — free-floating intelligentsia: "Rousseau's antithesis of individual and society was felt by them with peculiar force" (Pascal, *Sturm und Drang*, 304).

2688 On the legend surrounding Rousseau, see Süßenberger, *Rousseau im Urteil*, 21 ff., 159 ff. ("between exorcism and hagiography"); Trousson, *Rousseau et son œuvre dans la presse* (part 2), 257 ff.; on Christoph Kaufmann's "lived Rousseauism" as an extreme but characteristic example from the *Sturm und Drang* era, see Muchow, *Jugend und Zeitgeist*, 31 ff.; on the reception and legend of Rousseau among the young Schiller, Hölderlin, and Hegel, see Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 33, note, 39, 68 f., 80; cf. Voisine, *"Nouvelle Héloïse" et Génération de Werther*, esp. 123 ff.

2689 Trousson, *Rousseau et son œuvre dans la presse* (part 1), 291 ff.; Guthke, *Frühgeschichte des Rousseauismus*, 385 f.; Tubach, *Perfectibilité*, 146 ff.; Fester, *Rousseau und die deutsche Geschichtsphilosophie*, passim.

2690 Here, people follow not only Shaftesbury but the British school more broadly, whose social-philosophical representatives were read attentively: Ferguson's influential *Essay on the History of Civil Society* appeared, for example, in Garve's German translation in 1768, barely a year after the original publication.

To grasp the deeper intellectual-historical dimension of Leibniz's reception by leading representatives of the German late Enlightenment, a brief reminder of the originally ambivalent physiognomy of his thinking is necessary. A genetic analysis of thought is not always a prerequisite for understanding its influence. In this case, however, it is largely true that the aspect of Leibniz's thought that most strongly promoted the emerging philosophy of union stood in contradiction to the aspect that could not meet the needs of the philosophy of union, or not to the same extent, and was therefore set aside. Here, we are referring to the separation of mind and sensibility made at the price of the artificial construction of pre-established harmony on the one hand, and the teleological unification of both on the other. This conflict in Leibniz's philosophy, which appears in several forms (mathematics vs metaphysics, mechanism vs teleology, optimal static whole vs development idea), can be explained, just as in other cases we've encountered, by Leibniz's polemical intentions—i.e., the fact that he faced two opponents simultaneously, and the combating of one required at least a partial retraction of the argumentation used against the other. As already noted, the logical consequence of the prioritization of worldview in thinking, under given circumstances, is often overshadowed by the polemical, and the prioritization of worldview in Leibniz can hardly be doubted, especially since it can be established chronologically: for this precocious genius, central philosophical theses such as the concept of harmony are firmly established before any attempt to systematically develop his own metaphysics.[2691] Leibniz seeks to philosophically support certain doctrines that he views as indispensable ideal prerequisites for the morality and happiness of the modern individual and society as a whole; the morally appropriate must coincide with the true at all costs.[2692] This attitude materializes in two large,

2691 About Leibniz's early worldview, see Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, 29 ff. Already Kabitz had emphasized against Couturat, Russell, and Cassirer that it was impossible to derive Leibniz's system purely from logical premises; the theological-metaphysical component predominated even in his earliest engagement with scientific questions (*Philosophie des jungen Leibniz*, 2, 55). Similarly Heimsoeth, *Leibniz' Weltanschauung*, 366 f., 370 ff. Cf. the remarks by Jalabert directed against Brunschvicg, *Théorie leibnizienne de la substance*, 44 ff.

2692 See the conceptually and psychologically excellent presentation by Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, 233 ff., 191 ff.

complementary endeavors. One is the defense of the dogmas of Christian religion (from the immortality of the soul to transubstantiation), but this is undertaken with a view to certain moral outcomes and thus aims at interpreting or reforming Christianity in terms of moral theses and expectations, thereby attempting to end the internal conflict within the church.[2693] The second is the refutation of contemporary atheism—this "monster of atheism, from which nothing can be expected except universal anarchy and the overthrow of human society".[2694] Since God guarantees freedom and morality, consistent determinism must, in turn, imply atheism.

The distinction between the theism of Descartes and the pantheism of Spinoza is, therefore, secondary in terms of their ostensibly shared determinism, even misleading. From the perspective of concern for God, morality, and freedom, Descartes and Spinoza are often lumped together.[2695] Throughout his life, Leibniz portrays Spinoza, more for polemical than logical reasons, as the most consistent Cartesian, which, of course, aims at discrediting Cartesianism. This confusion of the differences between Descartes and Spinoza, as convenient as it may have been for Leibniz, has backfired. By leveling the charge of determinism or fatalism, Leibniz fails to recognize that Descartes and Spinoza differ in an important way. For Descartes, determinism arises because res cogitans and res extensa are not only separate but also pre-established substances,[2696] which implies the complete autonomy of mere mechanism. As a substance, matter is indestructible and takes on new forms continuously—an idea that Leibniz considers particularly "dangerous," since it would mean that there is no immortality of the personal soul, only the immortality of the modifiable substantial soul.[2697] While Cartesian determinism stems from the separation between substantia corporea and mens, and thus from the expulsion of the soul from nature, Spinoza's

2693 See above, Chapter II.

2694 Conze, *Leibniz*, 48 f.

2695 Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, 117 ff.

2696 *Principia Philosophiae*, LII = *AT*, VIII, 24 f.

2697 *Philosophische Schriften*, IV, 275, 300, 334, 340. The difficulties of Cartesianism with the Christian dogma of transubstantiation are obviously an early reason for Leibniz's criticism of the Cartesian doctrines of extension and motion, see Nason, *Leibniz's Attack*, 451 ff.

determinism, on the other hand, goes back to the absolute union of both within the framework of one substance, where both are subjected to the same necessity. Despite his polemical equation of Descartes and Spinoza, Leibniz is objectively faced with two conceptions of determinism, or of the substantial status of res cogitans, and must therefore, unwillingly, employ two constructions of thought in order to oppose both conceptions simultaneously, with the contradiction between these constructions remaining unconscious to him to the extent that he equates the two versions of determinism. To the Spinozist idea of one substance, Leibniz counters the plurality of substances, or monads (which he sees as the "destruction of Spinozism")[2698], and at the same time the separation of soul and body, which is emphasized rather than resolved through the pre-established harmony. He confronts the substantially autonomous Cartesian res extensa in the opposite way, as here the task is precisely to animate matter, that is, to unite it with the soul—whether or not this union is understood in terms of the soul or is seen as panpsychic.[2699] Leibniz thus questions the Cartesian equation of matter and extension (which, incidentally, the materialists had to do as well)[2700] and replaces the constant of movement, on which Descartes' mechanical invariability of the laws of nature relies, with the constant of force, thus shifting the focus from mechanics to teleology, as force mediates between form and matter and thus forms the soul or entelechy of the latter. The doctrine of substantial form is renewed.[2701]

One cannot claim that this refutation of Cartesianism is Spinozism in the sense of following Spinoza's teachings in detail. As an opponent of Descartes, Leibniz draws on Scholasticism[2702] on one

2698 Letter to Bourguet from December 1714 = *Philosophische Schriften*, III, 575.
2699 On Leibniz's panpsychism, see Jalabert, *Théorie leibnizienne de la substance*, 42 ff.
2700 See our analysis in Chapter IV, Section 4 a.
2701 *Système nouveau*, *Philosophische Schriften*, IV, 478 f.
2702 Both to scholastic ontology and to scholastic logic, see Kabitz, *Philosophie des jungen Leibniz*, 15, 19, 49 f., 78; Belaval, *Leibniz critique de Descartes*, 163 f.; Jalabert, *Théorie leibnizienne de la substance*, 74 ff. From the standpoint of a "modernized" Aristotelianism adapted to the new worldview, Leibniz also rejects Boyle's conception of nature, see Nobis, *Bedeutung der Leibnizschrift De ipsa Natura*, 537 (cf. above Chapter IV, Sections 3 b and 4 a).

hand and the natural philosophy of the Renaissance[2703] on the other. However, a strongly Spinozistic aspect can be identified in Leibniz, if the term "Spinozism" is used to represent what Leibniz did not wish to adopt, namely, the radical anti-Cartesian approach to the unification of res cogitans and res extensa within a monistic framework. In this sense, Spinozism is objectively present in Leibniz's philosophy, and it need not be dependent on his subjective attitude towards the work and person of Spinoza.[2704] When Leibniz combats Spinozism with the plurality of substances, on the other hand, he must counter Cartesianism through the dynamic unification of the two separate substances. The unification dynamics in Leibniz's thought, however, are teleologically conceived, and in addition, he adheres to a more flexible schema that facilitates the separation or union of soul and body according to need, while Spinoza takes a definitive stance on this issue. The unification approach itself remains the same; the unification derives its dynamic from the dialectic of the relationship between soul and body, whether they are considered separate substances or modes of the same substance. Thus, Leibniz must largely merge res cogitans and res extensa within this framework, even if only through the spiritualization of the latter (which, for that reason, should cease to be merely *extensa*), while the construction of pre-established harmony excludes such a merging in purely logical terms. In a certain sense, one could assume that the difference between the unification aspect of Leibniz's thought and Spinozism lies more in the number of substances than in the nature of substance itself (this impression has, after all, decisively shaped Leibniz's reception by the German late Enlightenment). Precisely for this reason, Leibniz had to place so much importance on the plurality of substances; by thus invoking separations to avoid a purely Spinozistic monism, he indirectly approaches Descartes, which remains unconscious to him because, as mentioned, he equates Spinoza and Descartes and thus no longer sees that, in light of the significant differences between the two thinkers, every move away from one must necessarily be a move toward the

2703 Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, 263 ff.

2704 The question of the relations between the two philosophers in the years 1676–1679 thus becomes largely irrelevant for intellectual history; one may even say that Stein (*Leibniz und Spinoza*, esp. 47 ff., 73 ff.) overrated the importance and the warmth of Leibniz's feelings toward Spinoza at that time.

other. Just as Descartes, as the true substance, only recognized God[2705] and still called res cogitans and res extensa so as to metaphysically establish their complete independence from one another, so also with Leibniz, only the Monad of Monads, i.e., God, possesses that absolute autonomy which truly deserves the name of substance. The usual monads, being created by God, cannot generate or destroy themselves naturally,[2706] and thus they are to float between time and eternity. It remains unclear, furthermore, how monads can be attributed substantiality to the same extent as God when the latter does not carry any of the imperfections that the former exhibit (e.g., unclear and indistinct representations). Were the monads true, i.e., uncreated substances, God would be redundant; conversely, if God is superior to the usual monads in certain respects, these must be considered imperfect modifications of the One, the perfect substance. Leibniz thus entangles himself in the same ambiguities that, according to his own view, made Descartes the precursor of Spinoza, which again reveals, albeit negatively, the similarities between his anti-Cartesianism and the general unification tendencies of Spinozism.

Leibniz certainly emphasizes the teleological idea both against Descartes and Spinoza, but he cannot unify and autonomously develop his own standpoint or make it independent of his respective polemical counterarguments. The character of teleology is determined by the framework in which it is meant to operate. Within the construction of pre-established harmony, it is actually a teleology imposed externally, i.e., by God as the purposefully acting world reason; in relation to the individual substance, it is again an innate and self-sustaining development that coincides with the tendency and structure of unification. Another distinction is perhaps even more important. Within the former construct, the goal connected to divine teleology is fully realized from the outset, i.e., through the act of creation. Since God cannot create anything other than the best world, His work is, by definition, the realization of all conceivable possibilities, not only in the physical sense (the seamless chain of beings) but also in a moral-normative sense. This world is static and closed; otherwise, God would not be perfect, and the principle of

2705 *Principes de la philosophie*, LI = *Akademie Ausgabe*, VIII, 24.
2706 *Monadologie* §§ 6; *Principes de la nature* § 2 = *Philosophische Schriften* VI, 607, 598.

sufficient reason would be questioned. However, within the construct tending toward a dynamic unification, teleology appears as an ever-concluding and yet always unfinished process, a kind of *creatio continua*, which immortalizes life in its changing diversity. The use of teleology to explain the development and transformation of life[2707] and the entire creative activity of nature suggests a dynamic, still open worldview, which, in contrast to the initially present best of all possible worlds, teleologically tends toward the better. As has been aptly noted, Leibniz actually holds two conceptions, one of which could be called "optimism" in the specific sense of the ever-present realization of the optimum, while the other might be termed meliorism.[2708] Their common teleological aim, although substantially different in each case, is directed against the equally shared, albeit in each case somewhat modified, determinism of Descartes and Spinoza.

This endeavor, however, seems to have hardly succeeded. The "optimistic" construction is entirely dependent on the rational-divine principles of its creation, and any rebellion against their necessity would thus question the principles that brought this necessity into being: this is as strict as the Spinozist determinism can be.[2709] The same holds true for the melioristic construction, only here determinism appears in the form of the determination of the development possibilities of the substance through its original nature or concept ("chaque substance doit exprimer des présent tous ses états futurs")[2710]. Despite all the theological casuistry Leibniz offers to prove his thesis, such as that Adam acted entirely freely even though the course of his actions was predetermined (in this regard, he is more consistent when he limits human freedom to the ignorance of the future).[2711] To explain the apparent paradox that Leibniz cannot abandon determinism while fighting against it, we must recall our earlier discussion about the polemical sense of the concept of necessity.[2712] If determinism is understood in terms of norms and a fundamentally optimistic worldview, it is "good" because it represents

2707 *Monadologie* §§ 74, 75 = *Philosophische Schriften* VI, 619 f.
2708 Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 256 ff.
2709 Ibid., 168 ff.; cf. Belaval, *Leibniz critique de Descartes*, 451.
2710 Letter to Bayle, Autumn 1702, *Philosophische Schriften* III, 66.
2711 *Théodicée* I, § 58 = *Philosophische Schriften* VI, 134.
2712 See above, Chapter II, Section 2 b.

the ontologically unavoidable realization of those norms—while, conversely, the rejected (for Leibniz, the Spinozist or Cartesian) determinism must appear abominable because it dares to appear without normative signs. Because it is about defending the norms and their effective (i.e., undertaken by modern intellectual means) defense, God is also identified with them or subjected to reason. Not coincidentally, Leibniz fought under the banner of determinism in his controversy with Clarke, rejecting the *manus emendatrix*: he needs a completely predictable God because he does not want to even hypothetically question the moral values and the metaphysical truths that he believes uphold them. This forms the basis of his version of rational religion, which aims to end the confessional struggle: the deterministic-mathematical worldview is, as noted in another context,[2713] its great model. On the other hand, the completed perfect whole (i.e., the "optimistic" model in contrast to the melioristic one) fulfills the ideological function of the idea of the whole itself. Within it, those aspects that contradict the normative view underlying or assumed for the whole are negated or made nonsensical by being interpreted and evaluated in light of that view. If the whole is by definition good, then what appears evil is merely "appearance"—i.e., "appearance" is everything that contradicts the basic stance, which therefore seeks to embody nothing less than the truth of being; the contradictory is subjected to the meaning of the whole, which represents the embodiment of the basic stance.[2714] Through this, the latter, along with its associated normativity, is meant to become irrefutable.

It is now clear which of the two constructions of thought that Leibniz employed in his (despite his personal impression) dual polemic had the most significant influence on the monistic ontology of the German late Enlightenment. Not the opponent of Spinoza, but the opponent of Descartes, as expected, i.e., in the sense of the entire

2713 See above, Chapter II, Section 2 b.

2714 This is the meaning of the unification of Being under the sign of norms or God, as carried out by Leibniz. To use two formulations of Jalabert: "À l'identité de l'Un et de l'Être s'ajoute l'identité de l'Être et de la Valeur" or: "L'identité de l'Être et de la Valeur implique l'identité de la valeur et de l'Unité" (*Leibniz, philosophie de l'unité*, 454, 455). On Leibniz's identification of Being and Unity, see below in this section.

Enlightenment anti-Cartesianism, came to prominence. Leibniz and Spinoza are seen by both friends and foes, as well as by Herder and Jacobi, as at least parallel philosophical phenomena.[2715] It is well known how often the accusation of Spinozism had already been levied against Leibniz earlier.[2716] Apart from any influence on specific questions, the most important aspect of Leibniz's reception is that he provided structures that could be autonomized and freely transferred; they could not only be detached from their original content but could also challenge it directly. For example, the structure of the monad is largely regarded as exemplary and is applied to the universe in its interconnection with God (which corresponds to the teleological intertwining of soul and body), although hardly anyone takes into account Leibniz's intention to broaden the metaphysical power of Spinoza's single substance through the plurality of substances. A substance indeed means a more extensive union than many, and that now counts; the extensibility of the union should by no means fall behind its intensity. On the other hand, the forerunners of the new ontology have a clear conscience because they, as mentioned, attribute monadic structural features to the one substance, i.e., they spiritualize matter through (and through normatively conceived) teleology, thus believing they avoid the despised consequences of the ("bad," not the "true") Spinozism. Determinism (without normative signs) and fatalism are as unacceptable to them as they were to Leibniz—and beyond that, they are identified with pessimism (no attractive solution is seen in the Spinozist Stoicism). The adoption of Leibniz's decisive optimism and the development of a radical theodicy[2717] are thus regarded as the most effective antidote to the direct or indirect adoption of Spinozist unification motives, regardless of their mitigation through Leibniz's teleology. The significance of the signs is that great. This function of the optimistic attitude, which was regarded

2715 Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 161, 555. The necessary information on the spread of Spinozism in Germany can be found in the dissertations by Bäck and Krakauer as well as in the works by Grunwald and Altkirch (see bibliography); cf. Baumgardt, *Spinoza und der deutsche Spinozismus*, passim. All of these writings have, if anything, only informative value.

2716 Stein, *Leibniz und Spinoza*, 1 ff.

2717 On the *Theodicy* in Germany between Leibniz and the late Enlightenment, see Wegener, *Problem der Theodizee*, 49 ff., 56 ff., 69 ff., 79 ff.; Kremer, *Problem der Theodizee*, 103 ff., 142 ff.

as a logical refutation of materialism (since materialism = fatalism = pessimism, optimism is, by definition, an argument against materialism: it may seem paradoxical, but this was the prevailing normative thought mechanism), played a decisive role in giving Leibniz precedence over Spinoza, especially as optimism soon escalated into an almost apocalyptic mood.

As for the Cartesianizing side of Leibniz's thinking, the programmatic separation of soul and matter, and thus the construction of pre-established harmony based on that separation, is gradually set aside. The idea of harmony is retained, but it is simultaneously translated into the language of dynamic unification. In other words, the idea of the whole is emphatically maintained, not least because of its mentioned ideological usefulness, but at the same time, its static character is removed, leading to the following configuration: the "optimistic" model is now thought in terms of the structures of the "melioristic" model, that is, the unification dynamics. Through this process—programmatically and consciously—the idea of the whole is now intertwined with the idea of development within a single construction. Another reinterpretation is also significant. The model of pre-established harmony, which opposed occasionalism and at the same time the Calvinistic-Cartesian voluntarist God, now incorporates the thesis that God does not intervene continuously and arbitrarily in the world's course. However, since harmony is now understood as unification, this thesis no longer confirms the rational character of the Creator, but rather serves as another argument to eliminate the traditional personal God, who is no longer so urgently needed when spirit and sensibility are not ontologically separated or do not require artificial harmonization. The harmonization is a teleology from the outside; now, however, the emphasis is on the inherent teleology or the original intertwining of spirit and sensibility. Accordingly, God is intertwined with the world, as if the entelechy of the latter: the curtailment of His personality through the connection to the *verites de raison* thus aids in His depersonalization in the sense of a fundamentally different conception (Clark's concerns were therefore not entirely unfounded). However, to the extent that the independence of God or spirit is preserved for moral reasons, one becomes entangled in the same difficulties that arose in Leibniz's determination of the relationships between the substantiality of the monads and that of

God. This ambiguity persisted in the ontological constructions of the German late Enlightenment until the formation of a consistent monism after 1795.[2718]

From these explanations, it is evident that the rediscovery of Leibniz by the German late Enlightenment was not a mere adoption and processing of Leibnizian aspects of Wolffianism. Without a doubt, it promoted the spread of certain Leibnizian commonplaces, and that was not unimportant. However, the turn to Leibniz after 1760 marked a new beginning, which followed the collapse of Wolffianism as a whole, rather than its division into two factions. As the static harmony gives way to the dynamic union, Wolffianism loses its appeal; its concept of harmony is dismissed as a mechanism, which is merely the opposite side of intellectualism or the sharp separation between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, resulting in the complete disembodiment of the latter. Wolff's refusal to accept monads with soul or imagination (which contributed new support for atomism and mechanism) is seen as an obstacle on the path to unification, especially as this unification occurs through the spiritualization of matter. The tendency against Wolff is also directed towards intertwining possibility and actuality, or *verités de raison* and *verités de fait*, in the same way as was done regarding spirit and sensibility, or God and the world. The separation between possibility and actuality, moreover, seemed to correspond to the distinction between external teleology (God creates everything for the sake of man) and inherent teleological unification dynamics; once that separation falls, Wolff's "naive" teleology must also disappear. External guarantees, even divine ones, are redundant when God, i.e., teleology and the urge for unification, are placed within the things themselves. This is the new ontological foundation of the doctrine of the best world, or "everything is good." Leibniz is particularly seen as a kindred spirit when he depicts the general liveliness of the world in an almost lyrical tone,[2719] or when he understands unity as the ontological characteristic of being par excellence: "*ce qui n'est pas véritablement un être, n'est pas non plus véritablement un être*" (not coincidentally, this sentence, to which Spinoza would have gladly

2718 Here, of course, Hölderlin's unification philosophy is meant, see Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 318 ff.

2719 *Monadologie* § 69 = *Philosophische Schriften* VI, 618 f.

agreed, echoes a Cartesian).[2720]

A significant contribution to the ontological consolidation of unity was made by Leibniz's thesis, which became central to the philosophy of unification, stating that a part of the whole simultaneously represents its type: the monad is meant to reflect the universe, in its individual and unique way.[2721] The individual and the universal are thus conceived in their unity, with the union with the whole being the prerequisite for the unfolding of individuality—contrasting with determinism, which, from the perspective of the new ontology, is seen as the suppression of the individual by the whole. In this way, the concept arises that freedom consists in the unfolding of innate forces. And since the individual is supposed to be the type of the whole—meaning it must also include all parts of the whole—its unfolding in union with the whole is understood as an all-encompassing development. In other words, spirit and sensibility are equally present in the individuality conceived in this way, and their mutual union is deepened through the union of the individuality with the whole. This is how Leibniz's statements about the inseparability of soul and body are typically interpreted.[2722] One then takes a further step by equating the monad not just with a soul or a body, but with the complete individuality encompassing both, thereby granting the concept of the organism the ontological significance of a type. (Leibniz himself had effectively made this step: "*Monadem completam seu substantiam singularem voco non tam animam, quam ipsum animal aut analogum, anima vel forma et corpore organico praeditum*.[2723]")

The completion of monism in the sense of a solid union seems to be the best possible solution to combating materialism while affirming the Enlightenment's anti-Cartesianism and the rehabilitation of sensibility. However, materialism was just as much monism, and likewise, in the struggle against Cartesianism, it had dynamized matter by embedding the roots of spirit within it. The danger arising from this fundamental structural similarity is to be neutralized by ensuring that the new monistic construction adopts completely different precedents

2720 Letter to Arnauld from April 1687, *Philosophische Schriften* II, 97 (Leibniz's emphases).

2721 *Monadologie* § 57 = *Philosophische Schriften* VI, 616.

2722 *Monadologie* § 72 = *Philosophische Schriften* VI, 619.

2723 Letter to Bernoulli, 30 September 1698 = *Mathematische Schriften* III, 542.

than materialism—precedents that are defined in a valuable-optimistic way and are seen as deriving from the realm of spirit. The whole is under the guidance of spirit (i.e., the fundamental attitude), although within it, spirit and sensibility may be as blended as possible—so that, together and on the basis of a teleology, which ultimately aims to realize the goals of spirit and the fundamental attitude, they can fulfill the function assigned to them by these aforementioned precedents. Yet, even under the guidance of spirit, the new monism cannot eliminate all contact points with materialism. Because of the accepted entanglement of spirit and sensibility, spirit can no longer be treated as pure intellect. Since monism generally opposes the separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, the anti-materialist monism is just as anti-intellectualist as materialism. Therefore, it must conceive of the concept of spirit far more comprehensively than that of pure intellect in order to be monistic at all. This contamination of intellect, however, (at least from the intellectualists' perspective) paved the way for materialism, as made clear by the reception of the anti-Cartesian Leibniz by figures like Diderot.[2724] This philosophical and intellectual connection has been summarized as follows: "So long as the essence of spirit consists merely in the negation of material things, those things cannot be subsumed within its realm. Spirit must be given a predicate that makes it possible to subsume material things (or define them so that they can be subsumed) under its concept. Thus, spirit is here conceived almost as being allied to the gods of the enemy, so as to defeat them all the more surely. Viewed from the earlier standpoint, this must appear as a corruption of its essence".[2725] Even the most astute contemporaries did not fail to notice that fundamentally, it was a matter of signs. Thus, from the viewpoint of materialistic monism, one laments the inversion of these signs (of the Leibnizians La Mettrie wrote: "Ils ont plutôt spiritualisé la matière, que matérialisé l'âme")[2726], whereas from a

2724 See above, Chapter IV, Section 4 a.

2725 Erdmann, *Versuch*, II, 1, 7 f. Cf. Dessoir, *Geschichte der neueren deutschen Psychologie*, 451: "The equality of body and soul can now either be interpreted materialistically or spiritualistically: either the soul is somehow reduced to the body or the body is somehow understood as spiritual. The monistic tendency in both such different systems brought them so close together that even among Leibniz's followers the inextirpable materialistic inclinations of most philosophers began to show."

2726 *L'Homme Machine*, *Œuvres* I, 286.

radically dualistic perspective, one mocks that the character of monism is determined more by signs than by binding structures (this is how one could read Kant's remark: "Leibniz intellectualized the appearances, just as Locke had sensualized the concepts of understanding")[2727]. The inevitable kinship with materialism as monism was also sensed by the representatives of the new ontology, and the resulting unease expressed itself in the mentioned attempt, despite all unification, to preserve the independence of a personal God and a spiritual principle. But this could only result in logical vacillation and half-measures.

The influence of Leibniz in this sense also made itself felt in the field of psychology. In light of the general Enlightenment emphasis on anthropology and psychology, it was understandable that the value of metaphysically inspired views should be measured, at least in part, by the needs of these disciplines. In Germany, as in England and France, the conviction gained ground that psychology and anthropology were fundamental sciences whose results should not only be binding for epistemology but also for history, political theory, and moral philosophy. The elevation or autonomization of these fields meant, in itself, the downgrading of logic and metaphysics in the traditional sense of scholastic philosophy, thus delivering a direct blow to the worldview associated with these disciplines. The methodological decision was also a content-based one; the autonomization of psychology and anthropology thus inherently implied the rejection of syllogism and the shift toward the sensibly-empirical in the broadest sense. Two insights dominated the new theory of the soul in varying degrees: the decisive role of psychic sensibility or passions and the intertwining of the psychic and the physical. The battle against materialism and immoralism was, under the new circumstances, rather waged through the assertion of the innate in humans than through a systematic and consistent rejection of monism as such. The spread of the doctrine of substantial unity of the soul can thus be seen as the lasting contribution of Wolffianism to the German Enlightenment, even though the content of this doctrine was modified by the consideration of psychic sensibility and the blending of body and soul, so that one no longer felt committed to Wolffianism. Many doubted that the primary force in which all faculties are rooted was the *vis*

2727 *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B 327 = *Akademie-Ausgabe* III, 221.

repraesentativa, but most assumed the existence of a fundamental force. When minds disagreed on its definition and the hierarchy of faculties, this debate was directly or indirectly connected to the burning question of the role of intellect, which had clear moral-philosophical implications. Such considerations continued to dictate a more or less clear division between higher and lower faculties, with the laws of association being applied to the latter, while the former were attributed the ability for purely logical thought.[2728] The distinction between the active and passive parts of the soul persisted even where the common origin of thinking and feeling from a single primal force, with both faculties appearing as its modifications, was most strongly emphasized.[2729] Nonetheless, the unification approach soon developed its own logic, which eventually favored the elevation of sensibility in general. This was evident in the attempt to use the broad framework of Leibniz-Wolffian theory to incorporate the empiricism breaking through from all sides, initially in its Lockean form. "In Leibniz's theory of representation, where all mental modifications are brought into one concept, an opportunity for the coordination of thinking and feeling was found, which made possible the historical merger of this Leibnizian theory with Locke's derivation of concepts from sensory impressions.[2730]" This process began with the consideration of sensation as a kind of complete knowledge and soon developed into the thesis of the possibility of "sensory thinking" alongside "thinking feeling." Thus, Sulzer, in his attempt to account for the aesthetic phenomenon from his Leibniz-Wolffian position, made this endeavor.[2731]

From the perspective of the emerging philosophy of union, the

2728 Dessoir, *Geschichte der neueren deutschen Psychologie*, 391 ff. The caution against Locke's epistemology and psychology emphasized by Fismer (*Locke in the German Enlightenment*, 439 f.) can thus be explained. However, Fismer overlooks that Locke was effective precisely through his paradoxical merger with Leibniz (see below).

2729 For example in Eberhard, who imagines thinking and feeling as in "mutual influence" based on the "original fundamental force of the soul," but at the same time emphasizes the distinction between passive and active parts of the soul with explicit reference to the problem of free will (*Allgemeine Theorie des Denkens und Empfindens*, 17, 36 f.).

2730 Sommer, *Grundzüge*, 69.

2731 Ibid., 203.

position in *Nouveaux Essais* was well-suited to bring together the partially contradictory aims of the prevailing psychological direction, which could neither be materialistic nor intellectualistic. It aimed to philosophically invigorate all of these aims at once—i.e., to represent the indispensable thesis of the unity of the soul in such a way that the danger of materialism could be warded off not through compromises and new divisions, but in an authentically monistic manner, namely by deepening the concept of the dynamic unified whole. This deepening meant abandoning the distinction between a passive and an active part of the soul, a distinction even the proponents of the unity thesis had maintained, rejecting any notion of passivity. This bold move aimed to achieve two things. On the one hand, it implied a clear elevation of sensibility, whose supposed passivity was now seen as merely a lower degree of activity; this addressed the seemingly unstoppable advance of empiricism and modernized the argument. On the other hand, the elevated sensibility was imbued with the qualities of the spirit, or spiritualized, so that the soul as a whole, with the added help of the innate, could be placed under the guidance of the moral in the broadest sense, i.e., of the spiritual principle. From this perspective, the elevation of sensibility could not mean a gain for materialism; on the contrary, it was meant to strip materialism of its own ground, namely sensibility itself. The exact same strategy was, as we saw, applied on the ontological level. Therefore, here as well as there, traditional intellectualism had to be sacrificed in the fight against materialism. The "nisi intellectus ipse" was not used to revive intellectualism in this or that form (with Kant being the exception here), but rather to bring about its final downfall.

The earlier-mentioned tendency to combine Leibnizian and Lockeian positions was therefore intensified by the influence of the *Nouveaux Essais*. This was not only due to the power of Enlightenment empiricism but also because of Leibniz's method of argumentation. In order to claim against Locke that the soul always thinks, Leibniz expands the concept of thinking by equating it largely with the concept of activity.[2732] Activity, however, is just as present in the lower

2732 It is highly characteristic — especially regarding the possibility discussed here of merging Leibnizian and Lockean positions — that Leibniz admitted he was inspired by Locke's notion of "uneasiness" (*Nouveaux essais*, II, xx § 6 = *Philosophische Schriften* V, 151; cf. II, iii § 9 = V, 101).

faculties as in the higher ones. The *petites perceptions* keep the soul constantly awake, even when it is not conscious of them.[2733] The innate activity, or *vis repraesentativa*, is thus detached from the concept of consciousness, and this is Leibniz's response to Locke, who seemed to presuppose the identity of consciousness and the innate in his refutation of Cartesianism. As can be seen, Leibniz refutes Locke by shifting the level of the question from consciousness to the unconscious. In doing so, he only partially counters Locke's thesis, while at the same time approaching him due to the elevation of the lower faculties. He saves the innate by abandoning its intellectualistic conception. However, when the lower faculties perform such significant functions, the intellect loses its specific value, and intellectual knowledge also loses its qualitative superiority over empirical knowledge. For, given the windowlessness of the Monad and its ability to reflect the universe within itself, all ideas would be innate and could simply be regarded as products of inner experience. The innate would then be the spiritualized empirical, and the difference would once again lie in the precedents.

As a successful formulation states: "Since, for Leibniz, all ideas are innate, the distinction between empirical and supposedly original knowledge disappears completely. For Locke, the mind is initially completely empty; for Leibniz, it contains the universe. Locke allows all knowledge to come from the outside, Leibniz, none. The result of these extremes is, as often the case, quite similar. Assuming Leibniz is granted that what we call external experience is in fact inner development, then Leibniz must also admit that, apart from experience-based knowledge, there are no specifically different forms of knowledge. Thus, Leibniz has only saved the "stone" of innate ideas.[2734]" This "stone," however, was entirely sufficient for the representatives of the emerging philosophy of union, as they were not concerned with the fate of intellectualism, but with saving the innate for moral-philosophical reasons. The connection between the innate

2733 *Nouveaux essais*, II, iii §§ 11 ff. = *Philosophische Schriften* V, 103 ff.
2734 Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, I, 394 f.; cf. Sommer, *Grundzüge*, 45: "The abolition of the fundamental distinction between external and internal experience through the mediation of the monadological theory of representation is the most important result of the convergence of Lockean and Leibnizian teachings."

and the unconscious even seemed to them to be an advantage, as it demonstrated the all-encompassing entanglement of human existence in being, with the unity of existence itself understood as the necessary way of that entanglement. Activity and unity, therefore, are laws of human existence and being together: this is the ontological foundation of psychology and anthropology within the framework of the philosophy of union. Leibniz's *lex continui* offered a welcome opportunity to combine Lockeian empirical knowledge theory and psychology with the (metaphysical) consideration of the immutable, though dynamic, nature of the soul, which marked another step towards merging the idea of development with the idea of the whole. The monistic construction is thus strengthened by all these detours.

b) Lessing

The two most important monistic approaches, standing under the sign of the rediscovered Leibniz, are represented by Lessing and Herder. In the latter, the approach to unification is more self-evident, more mature, and articulated almost diffusely. Lessing, by contrast, who had grown up under the dominance of Wolffianism, himself at various times represented the limbs of that opposition which, at a certain phase of his intellectual development, he sought to overcome within a synthesis. In other words: not only the unification approach, but also the moments or positions to be unified (and indeed still in their state of independence) are represented by him, even embodied (in terms of style of thought there is thus a certain similarity between him and Diderot). Nevertheless, his changes are changes in continuity; they do not stem from lack of principles but from his endeavor to grasp the common libertarian denominator of inherently opposing positions and from there to seek satisfying solutions now in one, now in another direction, with his eristic drive ensuring the mobility of his thought. With regard to the renewal efforts in theology, the common denominator was the break with orthodoxy in the sense of the authority of a revelation interpreted by ecclesiastical instances, and the demand for independent or rational insight into the nature and necessity of faith. These guiding motives determine Lessing's intellectual starting point. As it says in the letter to his father from May 30, 1749, the better Christian is not the one "who has the principles of

Christian doctrine in memory and often, without understanding them, on his lips, who goes to church and participates in all practices because they are customary... The Christian religion is not a work that one should accept from one's parents on faith and trust"[2735] Thus, a distinction is made between bad and good religion; as the character of Theophan in the *Freigeist* is meant to illustrate, "priests" and Christianity are by no means identical.

It was, of course, natural that the young man, partly shaped[2736] and partly tormented by Wolffianism, would seek the realization of his religious ideal in an explicitly anti-intellectual current. And since this ideal is based on the need for development and affirmation of life, i.e., on a distinctly modern conception, Lessing's early Pietism is strongly individualistic and linked to the Socratic demand for self-knowledge (Hamann is anticipated here): "Turn your gaze inward! In you are the unexplored depths, in which you can lose yourself to your benefit".[2737] Also, in connection with the figure of Socrates, the Pietistic ideal of reducing scholarship to virtue is introduced.[2738] Anti-intellectualism understandably also appears in the form of rejecting Newton and the mathematical methodology; "a few numbers connected with signs," which are supposed to unravel the secrets of nature, do not impress Lessing in the least.[2739] At the same time, he does not understand his position as a challenge to the ideas but as a continuation of the emancipatory concerns of modern rationalism (see what he writes about the liberator Descartes).[2740] Lessing is particularly disturbed by the "combination of divine scholarship and worldly wisdom," where "one weakens the other, since the latter forces faith through proofs, and the former supports the proofs with faith".[2741] From this perspective, Wolffian theology and mathematicalism belong together. Their common essence is, as it is stated in the youth poem "*Die Religion*", the "damned scholastic wisdom" and the "proud mind" that

2735 *Sämtliche Schriften*, XVII, 18.
2736 In the "Glückwünschungsrede bei dem Eintritt des 1743sten Jahres", *Sämtliche Schriften*, XIV, 135 ff., traces of this education are found.
2737 *Gedanken über die Herrnhuter*, *Sämtliche Schriften*, XIV, 156.
2738 loc. cit., 155.
2739 loc. cit., 155, 157.
2740 loc. cit., 156.
2741 loc. cit., 160.

"knows more than it concludes" and misses the actual question: "What is man? His happiness? The earth upon which he stumbles?[2742]". In the sense of the religious feeling philosophy, the young Lessing now takes a further step by deriving materialism, atheism, and fatalism from that spirit "which hates nothing but faith / And loves nothing but reasons".[2743] A conception that abolishes freedom by identifying soul and brain also does not know the concepts of good and evil.[2744] Lessing would never change his judgment of materialism based on this reasoning; if it is not repeated as emphatically later on, it is only because it is taken for granted. But these self-evident assumptions shape the character of thinking no less than deliberate goals.

Lessing soon turned away from his initial pietistic sympathies, to become, for almost twenty years (i.e., from 1752–3 until around 1770), an advocate of natural or rational religion and an opponent of "enthusiasm." His new stance forms the basis for the famous "rescues" of 1754. He praised Cardano, because this philosopher knew how to distinguish between the historical manifestations and essence of Christianity and avoided concluding that the historical success of

2742 *Erster Gesang*, vv. 35–38, 47 = *Sämtliche Schriften* I, 257 f. Already in *Der junge Gelehrte*, the complaint against book learning and scholastic wisdom is central. Even *Spartakus* accuses a consul: "You have sent human reason into the schools — to make it ridiculous" (III, 471).
This early attitude of Lessing also determines his later rejection of Wolffianism in important aesthetic and philosophical matters.
In the preface to *Laokoon* we read: "We Germans lack no systematic books. From a few accepted definitions we derive everything in the most beautiful order, whatever we want — at least better than any other nation." (IX, 5)
The philosophical principles on which the theory of the fable is based are: "Intuitive knowledge is self-evident. Symbolic knowledge borrows its clarity from intuitive knowledge."
And: "The universal exists only in the particular, and can only be intuitively known in the particular." (VII, 443)
The emphasis on Leibniz's ability to combine philosophical "cold-bloodedness" with the right use of properly understood "enthusiasm" is drawn from a similar reflection (XVI, 300).
2743 *Gedicht über die menschliche Glückseligkeit*, vv. 1–2 = *Sämtliche Schriften* I, 237.
2744 loc. cit., vv. 30–34 = p. 238. In a short review of La Mettrie's *Art de jouir*, Lessing says the book ought to have been titled *Porneutik*, cf. the notice of La Mettrie's death (*Sämtliche Schriften* IV, 423, 279).

Christianity proved its reasonableness, especially since, due to the nature of the "human heart," "a beloved whim can reach as far as truth shines in all its glory." Cardano "rather claimed that the whole teaching of Christ contains nothing that conflicts with morality or natural world wisdom, or that could not be harmonized with it".[2745] His mistake, Lessing argued, was in underestimating the rational aspects of non-Christian religions. Lessing now wanted to assert this with reference to natural religion, even going so far as to attribute to a Muslim a sharp critique of Christian practice: Christians would materialize the divine, replacing faith with superstition, and the "worship of sacred hallucinations" would not secure salvation after death, but rather substitute for righteousness.[2746] In idealtypical purity, the concept of natural religion is developed in the two drafts "On the Origin of Revealed Religion" and "On the Nature and Spread of Christianity," which must have been written between 1763 and 1764. In the latter, it is stated that early Christianity at least "externally showed only the great and beautiful approach of natural religion," practicing tolerance toward heretics, etc.; the essence of this Christianity is distinguished, just as in the "rescue of Cardano," by the manner in which it spread, which occurred "through purely natural means" – fanaticism and seduction not excluded, as Lessing clearly makes known.[2747] In the first draft, the question of natural religion is approached purely theoretically. Natural religion is a rounded, precisely definable spiritual system that logically precedes all positive religions; the priority could also be understood chronologically, if Lessing literally meant that positive religions would emerge only in the state of "civil union," which follows the "natural freedom of man" as the bearer of natural religion. Positive religions are not only sanctioned by their content but also by external factors, such as the prestige of their founder, and thus form modifications of the natural religion, giving it the effective form required by the "natural and accidental determinacy" of a state. In this function, positive religions are true; they are false to the extent that they "weaken and suppress the essence within them".[2748]

2745 *Sämtliche Schriften* V, 321.
2746 loc. cit., 325 f.
2747 *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 317, 319, 331.
2748 *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 312 f.

Very enlightening in regard to this entire thought structure is Lessing's explanation of the decay of natural religion into several (justifiable) positive religions. The geographical and social diversity of states was precisely mentioned as a reason; however, it already presupposes the diversity of people. Every person is "connected to natural religion according to the measure of their powers," but this measure is "different for every person," from which positivity arises, as religious consensus in a society, given that chaotic diversity, must ultimately rest on generally respected conventions.[2749] This consideration clearly implies the structural parallelism of the concept of natural religion with the mathematical-natural scientific conceptualized uniformity that enables natural laws. Formally, natural religion corresponds to a natural law, and therefore constants or uniformity are equally important to it—which the pietist opponents of natural religion were very much aware of when they advocated for the primacy of the individual. We have already discussed the structural connection between the mathematical-natural scientific model and natural law using the example of Grotius. It can thus be seen as confirmation of our interpretation when Lessing, in this draft, evaluates the relationship between natural law and positive law in the same way as the relationship between natural religion and positive religions. From the same perspective, it is also understandable that he forgets his previous rejection of mathematics and praises it in this context as an indispensable "philosophical preparation," which "accustoms our mind to order and clear, precise concepts, and teaches us what demonstration is; to skip these... is to take the direct path to enthusiasm".[2750] In this middle phase of Lessing's intellectual development, the earlier demand for a turn to the inward and the unspoken is increasingly forgotten, while the criticisms of "enthusiasm" grow stronger. In the 49th of the "Letters on Recent Literature" (2nd August 1759), the polemic against the religious philosophy of feelings reaches its public peak. Alongside the independence of moral reason (one can also act from "purely reasons of reason")[2751], which he defends here, Lessing also defends the right of theoretical, and indeed theological, engagement. The way the

2749 ibid.

2750 *Fortpflanzung und Ausbreitung*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 316.

2751 *Sämtliche Schriften* VIII, 129 f.

religious philosophers think about God, he calls "a state of feeling, connected with nothing but vague ideas, which does not deserve the name of thinking",[2752] and he wants to make the "touchstone" of all feeling about God precisely that type of theological thinking which the quoted philosopher of feeling describes in the following words: "a cold, metaphysical way that sees God almost only as an object of science, and philosophizes about Him just as impassively as if it were the concepts of time or space".[2753] Böhme is mentioned here as the "enthusiast par excellence"[2754] (although in the "Rescue of the Inepti Religiosi," he had not yet been completely dismissed),[2755] and even Shaftesbury's enthusiasm at this time was for Lessing "a truly disturbing illness of the soul".[2756]

To understand the reasoning behind Lessing's break with the philosophy of feeling, we must first recall the remark from the "Rescue of Cardano" regarding the nature of the human "heart," which is, in essence, not capable of always distinguishing "truth" from "caprice".[2757] If the Christian loses himself in the contemplation of his inner self and seeks God in it, he can at best gain a subjective certainty, based on the testimonies provided by the random world of his intellect. This is no effective defense against superstition for the individual, while for Christianity as a whole, it leads to a fragmentation into countless individual worlds. This creates chaos, and from chaos, sooner or later, relativism and skepticism will emerge. The demonstrated truth of religion, or the rational or natural religion, is meant to prevent precisely this danger, just as the mathematical method in philosophy is meant to confront philosophical skepticism. In his review of Beausobre's "Le Pyrrhonisme raisonnable," Lessing mentions that, with regard to combating skepticism, Leibniz's greatest concern was "to make metaphysical truths as certain as mathematical ones." Objections to such an endeavor would betray misology; "misology and misanthropy come from one source".[2758] From the

2752 loc. cit., 132.
2753 loc. cit., 131.
2754 loc. cit., 133.
2755 *Sämtliche Schriften* V, 348 f.
2756 *Fortpflanzung und Ausbreitung*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 329.
2757 *Sämtliche Schriften* V, 321.
2758 *Berlinische privilegierte Zeitung*, 28.8.1755 = *Sämtliche Schriften* VII, 50 f.

mathematical rigor in philosophy, Lessing hopes to strengthen the type of determinism that, with radically optimistic connotations, will prove the inevitability or objective bindingness of the normative. This is evident in the essay "Pope: A Metaphysician," co-written with Mendelssohn in 1755. From the perspective of the fight against "enthusiasm," it is quite understandable that reflections on the logical limits of poetry precede the substantive engagement with Pope's theses. The poet remains trapped in "sensory speech," which is ultimately incompatible with a "system of metaphysical truths" based on a deductive-syllogistic method.[2759] The further investigation implies that the poetic freedoms of Pope correspond to gaps in his thinking. The principle "From all possible systems, God must have created the best" is, of course, acknowledged, but it is also attributed to Leibniz, with Pope being accused of misinterpreting it. According to his (and Malebranche's) opinion, even in the best of worlds, imperfections or evils exist; it lies in God's hands to eliminate them, but for this, a divine intervention would be necessary, which, however, must not occur, since God only acts through general laws, and their unpleasant side effects must be accepted in light of the apparent usefulness of these laws. According to Leibniz, however, God refrains from intervening in individual cases because He cannot intervene, or because His voluntaristic intervention would disrupt the entire best world order. Therefore, non-intervention is only a necessary consequence of the fact that the world order is truly the best, as the apparent evils do not contradict the meaning of the whole but rather contribute to its perfection.[2760] God is thus denied any voluntarism or freedom (a divine power of freedom would be "empty caprice"; the idea that something is good because God willed it simply means nothing).[2761] The desolation over divine impotence, in not intervening to alleviate the evils and suffering directly, is simultaneously compensated by a radical optimism: there is no evil, everything is good. Pope is said to have lacked this optimism (which is why he wrote "all is right" and not "all is good")[2762], which prevented him from being a consistent determinist. Just as determinism should

2759 *Sämtliche Schriften* VI, 414, 416.
2760 loc. cit., 422, 429 f., 431.
2761 loc. cit., 439, 442.
2762 loc. cit., 426.

logically underpin the inevitability of the normative, radical normativism or optimism is meant to support this determinism psychologically.[2763]

The resulting metaphysical construct has as little to do with the pietistic conception of God as the structurally corresponding religion of reason has to do with the individualism of the religious philosophy of feeling. In the wish to make the normative logically binding, we may thus see the first fundamental reason for Lessing's early turning away from Pietism. The second relates, in my view, to his discomfort with what he must have felt as the hostility toward culture of this current. How Lessing thought about this question is shown clearly in his engagement with Rousseau's first *Discours*[2764] — (Although in Rousseau the general emancipatory aspect is highly appreciated; he is "the bold sage of the world, who regards no prejudices... but goes straight toward the truth etc.[2765]") Rousseauism and (extreme) Pietism were, as philosophies of feeling, quite closely related in this respect; both fundamentally concentrated on the individual inner life while excluding the cultural whole, and in their endeavor to promote the unfolding or deepening of the innate forces of man (no matter how these were defined), they tended toward contempt at least for those cultural phenomena most closely connected with social conventions (theater) or with "reason" (theoretical sciences). For the defenders of culture, this was understandably a cause of great disquiet, and Lessing likely often thought similarly to Herder later on: "... a Herrnhutish spirit in the pulpits, who makes scholarship into a sin and the lack of religion and philosophy into the origin of corruption, can introduce the spirit of burning libraries…[2766]"

We now come to the final phase of Lessing's development,

2763 It is easy to imagine what the content of the *Anti-Candide* would have been that Lessing planned to write, and in which according to Mendelssohn's report (*Morgenstunden* XV) "all the evils would finally be found to have been directed toward the wisest ends."
This form of determinism is not a fleeting conviction of Lessing's. Seventeen years after this writing, in *Emilia Galotti*, the philosophizing Countess Orsina says: "The word 'chance' is blasphemy. Nothing under the sun is chance." (IV, 3 = *Sämtliche Schriften* II, 428).

2764 *April 1751*, *Sämtliche Schriften* IV, 387 ff., especially 394 f., cf. V, 64 f.

2765 In the 1755 short review of the second *Discours*, *Sämtliche Schriften* VII, 38.

2766 *Journal meiner Reise*, *Sämtliche Werke* IV, 411.

which is directly relevant to the union approach in general. The two preceding phases, however different their duration and intensity might have been, are of great interest insofar as they express the opposing Enlightenment currents in almost ideal-typical purity. That they do so in religious philosophical language need not obscure the matter or narrow the intellectual historical horizon, as long as we keep the parallelism of the structures in mind. Lessing is therefore a highly representative figure because he has represented opposing positions and because he attempted to reach a synthesis.[2767] The fact that this attempt falls into the years after 1770 most clearly shows the objective concern of the German Late Enlightenment, especially since its atmosphere was not as self-evident for Lessing as it was, for example, for Herder or Goethe. Now, the religious philosophy of feeling and the reason- or nature-religion, which was based on the mathematical model, were independent entities, and an attempt at mediation did not seem necessary at first glance. It becomes necessary when Lessing, without fundamentally abandoning reason religion, significantly moderates his intellectualism. The reasons for this, I suspect, lie partly in the influence of the *Nouveaux Essais*, which Lessing even wanted to translate, and partly in the change in mood on the eve of the Sturm und Drang movement, which must have touched a sensitive observer like Lessing. This is suggested at least by a draft from the autumn of 1776 (with regard to the fragment controversy, this date is important: exactly then, Lessing wrote the "Contrasts" regarding Reimarus, which

2767 This observation does not diminish Lessing as a thinker; quite the opposite: it places him firmly as a representative figure of his age.
My interpretation, by using this periodization where temporal and conceptual-structural developments run together, aims to avoid the usual dead-end of Lessing scholarship: the futile attempt to force a unified image of Lessing, where, lacking secure intellectual-historical orientation, heterogeneous elements are mixed together, resulting in some texts being overemphasized, others ignored or distorted.
It is equally misleading to merely point out contradictions in Lessing's thought without recognizing that each "contradictory" part forms a coherent system of its own.
The research task, then, is to find the common denominator that enabled Lessing's transition from one coherent conceptual system to another. (cf. generally the good methodological remarks by Wessell, *Das widersprüchliche Wesen*, especially 188, 191 ff.)

appeared in the first days of 1777). Unlike in the 49th literary letter of 1759, here Lessing carefully distinguishes between enthusiasm and fanaticism, in order to emphasize the speculative fruitfulness, even necessity, of the latter. What does the philosopher actually do? "He seeks to clarify the dark vivid feelings he had during enthusiasm, once he has become cold again, into clear ideas" (this is Leibniz's language, which speaks for our assumption of the influence of the *Nouveaux Essais*; in this draft, by the way, the previously cited[2768] contrast between Leibniz and Wolff appears). Philosophers are therefore indulgent towards enthusiasts, even fanatics, because "they, the philosophers, would lose the most if there were no more enthusiasts and fanatics.[2769]" This new position towards intellectualism, however, leads Lessing, despite his reintroduction of pietistic motives (see below), not back to his early youth but instead merged with the impressions of the church history and patristic studies of the 60s, taking the form of a new evaluation of positive religion, specifically its ability to educate the not yet rational individual through the mobilization of psychological sensuality via revelation and revealed teachings.

The changed assessment of Orthodoxy at the beginning of the 1770s is clearly expressed in the letter to Mendelssohn from January 9, 1771. Lessing is concerned, "that, in throwing away certain prejudices, I may have thrown away a bit too much, which I will have to repeat. The only reason I haven't already done so is the fear of gradually bringing all the rubbish back into the house".[2770] The last sentence (as well as the letter to his brother from April 8, 1773)[2771] makes Lessing's still existing distance to Orthodoxy very clear. The rapprochement that occurred, however, was enough to generate the intellectual tension, while simultaneously holding on to reason as the final ideal, which ultimately led to the attempt at mediation within a synthetic philosophy of history. Lessing thus now discovers the educational sense, or the inner logic, of the "old religious system" despite its obvious shortcomings: "I know of no thing in the world in which human sharpness has been more shown and exercised than in it," he

2768 See above.
2769 *Über eine zeitige Aufgabe...*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XVI, 297, 299.
2770 *Sämtliche Schriften* XVII, 365.
2771 *Sämtliche Schriften* XVIII, 83.

writes to his brother on February 2, 1774.[2772] In the same letter, he accuses the Neologians of having torn down the wall between philosophy and theology, which ensured the independence of both.[2773] Over the past twenty years, Lessing had advocated the separation of theology and philosophy because he expected this to result in the autonomization of reason. However, now that he rejects the mixing of the two, it is because he fears primarily the subjugation of theology to a shallow or rational philosophy, which would push aside and forget the metaphysical and educational mystery hidden in religion—yet could neither explain nor respect it. From the opposite perspective, he nonetheless advocates for this very mixing, namely by recognizing the reasonableness of revelation. The positive religion contains the reasonable; thus, the reasonable can also work in, and even thanks to its fusion with, the positive. This is a main argument Lessing makes against Reimarus: "Revealed religion in no way presupposes a reasonable religion; rather, it includes it". In light of this, Lessing asks the rhetorical question, "whether the uniformity of proof, in textbooks for children and common people, is not more convenient and useful than a strict separation of reasonable and revealed doctrines".[2774] The fusion ultimately becomes the voluntary "captivity of reason under the obedience of faith," when reason recognizes its limits. However, it must first judge for itself whether the revelation is true or not,[2775] which again implies that positive religion has a reasonable side or function that can serve as a measure for reason. For not based on what exceeds its powers can reason decide, but rather the opposite: as soon as it grasps the reasonable in positive religion, it convinces itself that the incomprehensible is indeed holy mystery and not mere nonsense.

The comprehensible or reasonable now evidently refers to the postulates of that reasonable religion, which, as mentioned, is contained in the positive. The ideal of the rational religion is thus not abandoned, but it is reinterpreted to the extent that the concept of reason is transformed due to the new attitude towards intellectualism —this aligns entirely with the essence of Enlightenment rationalism.

2772 *Sämtliche Schriften* XVIII, 102.
2773 *loc. cit.*, 101.
2774 *Gegensätze*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XII, 434.
2775 *loc. cit.*, 432 f.

Reason now appears as a call to independence and existential intensity, to the simplicity and directness of faith in its immediate practical relationship to life. The demand for the separation between letter and spirit therefore comes to the forefront and carries Lessing's position in the Fragmentenstreit. In this, the common denominator of all religious renewal attempts is contained, which had so smoothly facilitated the swift transition of the young Lessing from his pietistic sympathies to rational religion. Thus, Lessing feels superior to all parties and can play aspects of one against aspects of the other: despite the new appreciation of enthusiasm and individual experience, he contrasts the binding nature of the rational religion and the culturally-educational merit of Orthodoxy with the religious emotional philosophy; despite his acknowledgment of the latter, he accuses the representatives of Orthodoxy of sterile adherence to the letter, and his plea for the freedom of biblical criticism and for further reduction of the letter is simply the reverse of his rejection of the rational treatment of scripture and religion by the Neologians. The juxtaposition of spirit and letter (this pair of concepts corresponds in Lessing's polemics to two others: religion vs. Bible and Christianity vs. theology) aims to make the former independent of the historically-philological attacks on the latter; the defense of the letter (by Goeze) should be as irrelevant to the matter as its refutation (by Reimarus).

Lessing can thus take the same arguments against both Orthodoxy and Neology (against Goeze, he defends only those theses he had presented in the "Gegensätzen" against Reimarus), and from the perspective of his new conception of the importance of psychological sensuality, he accuses both of worshipping the cold intellect.[2776] As for Neology, this has already been explained. Orthodoxy does the same by resurrecting a new scholasticism in the form of a historically-philological exegesis, which rivals the old in dryness and harmful effects: "No; the scholastic dogmatics have never inflicted such deep wounds on religion as the historical exegesis now daily inflicts on it".[2777] "Not for the gospel, but for its dogmatics,"

2776 Aner's claim is therefore false that the "Rationalist" Lessing simultaneously combats orthodoxy and neology because both hold fast to the concept of revelation (*Theologie der Lessingzeit*, 343). Cf. by contrast Kantzenbach, *Protestantisches Christentum*, 158.

2777 *Duplik*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 32.

each of its representatives fights.[2778] This amounts to a belief in authority: ultimately, every jot of scripture is believed because it was written by evangelists and apostles.[2779] In this way, Orthodoxy forfeits its possibilities, which it possesses in contrast to Neology: to warm the heart of the Christian and deepen the true faith (Lessing attributes these possibilities to the "true" Orthodoxy by distinguishing between the "Orthodoxist" and the Orthodox: "The Orthodox takes my side").[2780] Lessing contrasts all of this with two points: on the one hand, the thesis that accidental historical truths can never be evidence of necessary rational truths,[2781] and on the other, an expansion of the concept of rational truths in an anti-intellectualist sense. Reason refers to the "inner truth," which does not require the "hermeneutical" at all;[2782] it arises from the immediate grasp of the essence of Christianity, namely, love as practical action and confirmation of the truth of faith.[2783] Here, reason and feeling merge in the sense of Enlightenment rationalism; Lessing is confident "that the one whose heart is more Christian than their head will be completely unaffected by these objections [to biblical criticism]; because they feel what others are content to think".[2784]

The educational drift emerges in the concrete, most representative intellectual constellation of the Fragmentenstreit and is meant to achieve Lessing's dual polemic goal in one stroke. Against Orthodoxy, Lessing advocates for the realization of the ideal of reason completely independent of the binding of reason to historical events, while simultaneously, against the Neologists, he asserts the cultural function of Orthodoxy, which, through the sensualization or contamination of concepts of reason, serves to influence the psychological sensuality of (still) unreasonable people. Since Lessing

2778 *loc. cit.*, 27.
2779 *Axiomata*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 127.
2780 *Duplik*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 27.
2781 *Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 5.
2782 *Axiomata*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 128.
2783 *Testament Johannis*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 14.
2784 *Axiomata*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 123, Lessing's emphases. Cf. *loc. cit.*, 132, 134, 135: defense of feeling against the distrust of orthodox hermeneutics; in the 4th Anti-Goeze (= *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 164) "enlightenment" as a prerequisite of salvation.

has two opponents and wants neither to abandon the victory of reason nor deny the educational significance of its sensualization, there is no other logical way out for him than to show that the ideal of reason is not opposed to positive revelation but is realized through it. The task as posed structurally, despite translating the central concepts into the language of the theological dispute, encompasses the main problem of Enlightenment philosophy of history: namely, the resolution of the conflict between the causal and the normative. The causal, or sensual conditioning, meant the relativity of cultures, which was incompatible with the firmness of the intellectually grasped norm and hindered its realization. Similarly, for Lessing, the perpetuation of mere positivity, which arises from the effects of sensuality in the declared sense, means the eternal absence of the ideal of reason. Left alone and to itself, positivity can only produce relative, fundamentally equally legitimate cultural forms or religions. Then, reason remains an unrealized ought in the hereafter, which sometimes rebels indignantly against what exists—precisely because it has no touchpoints with it, i.e., lacks any solid support in reality. This is the dualistic perspective of intellectual normativeism, which changes once one considers the intertwining of spirit and sensuality in the form of the provisional sensualization of the ideal of reason or the intertwining of ought and historical being. If positive religion is, in itself, the opposite of the ideal of reason and can never reach it alone, it does so when it contains reason within itself. Reason here is that objectively given aspect of positivity, which undermines it as such, without its knowledge and against its intentions, by leading it to perform tasks that will ultimately help the ideal of reason, i.e., the unclouded norm, triumph. Thus, reason exists and acts before its visible realization. To promote the education of the initially sensually conditioned human race, it must sensualize itself, but without completely dissolving into this sensualization: it resides in it as a secret forward-driving force, while at the same time remaining outside as a norm yet to be realized, thus forcing the overcoming of the existing historical form in which it is sensualized and the transition to a higher one, etc.

In relation to the positions of the two theological opponents of Lessing, this view means the following: the orthodox belief in revelation represents reason in a particular phase of its development, a phase that will sooner or later be outdated. The error of the Orthodox

lies in the desire to perpetuate this phase, which stems from their ignorance of the ideal of reason. The error of the Neologists, on the other hand, lies in denying the fact that reason has sensualized itself and must also sensualize. The false approach arises from a narrow intellectualist understanding of the nature of reason, disregarding history and the sensual dimension of man, who must first be educated through the sensual means provided by positive revelation[2785] (not coincidentally, the first fifty-three paragraphs of the educational treatise initially appeared in the "Gegensätze" to Reimarus). With regard to his dual polemic, Lessing must therefore maintain the principle that reason exists historically first in its sensualizations and works towards their overcoming without their knowledge (had they this knowledge, they would themselves be reason and would negate themselves), for despite everything, it remains something more than any sensualization of it: it forms its objective meaning, its inner logic, or its teleology. The secret presence of reason in every phase of historical development can indeed only be established retrospectively, i.e., after the final implementation of the ideal of reason, or at least with the aim of it as the goal of history. If there were no a priori certainty of this realization, the position of Orthodoxy would be irrefutable, and the only possible reaction against it would consist in wielding the weapon of an intellectualist understanding of rigid and uncompromising reason; history would then be marked not by an ascending continuity but by a Manichean struggle between light and darkness. This is precisely what is to be avoided by the teleological view. Leibniz had employed it to overcome the Cartesian separation between res cogitans and res extensa without conceding anything fundamentally to blind sensuality or materialism. The same is now happening at the level of philosophy of history, for the sake of uniting those opposites that correspond to the separation between res cogitans and res extensa or spirit and sensuality: here, the normative and the causal (i.e., sensually conditioned) are to be connected (again without making fundamental concessions to blind sensuality, which here appears as positivity), which simultaneously brings about the union of the idea of the whole in the sign of the norm with the idea of development as a succession of sensually conditioned and, in itself,

2785 *Erziehung*, §§ 16, 17 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 418.

relative cultural formations.[2786]

Lessing is fully aware of the central importance of the teleological idea for his overall conception,[2787] and what is highly significant for the future philosophy of union is that he supports it with an apocalyptic mood and certainty, drawing on the triadic historical philosophical schema of Joachim of Floris.[2788] This certainty, in turn, is based on the conviction gained through the teleological idea that what seems to contradict the norm or reason should help it to be realized – namely, positive revelation or sensual conditioning. The norm is, therefore, irrefutable and invincible in every respect. The determinism of freedom, or freedom's sake, is invoked once again, only to find its final home in later constructions of this type. Therefore, future logical difficulties already arise with Lessing. The questions are: What sense does it make to distance oneself from the respective religious orthodoxy in light of its admitted educational function, and based on what objective criteria should it be decided when it is time to declare it outdated? What position should one take against it, knowing its irrationality and rationality? As we can see, through these

2786 Lessing always keeps in mind the historical determinacy of the peoples acting according to Providence (§§ 23, 54). His early contact with the "pragmatic" historiography of the Enlightenment must especially be highlighted here (e.g., the review of *L'Esprit des Nations* from 1753, V, 143f.: "Strictly speaking, there are no other causes than physical ones for why nations differ in passions, talents, and bodily characteristics; what are called moral causes are only consequences of physical ones."). History in general is highly valued: "Without history one remains an inexperienced child," he writes in a review from 1751 (IV, 332f.).
Of paramount importance is Lessing's encounter with Western European philosophies of history precisely at the moment he turns away from a one-dimensional religion of reason and begins to appreciate orthodoxy's historical function; it's well known how enthusiastically he speaks of Ferguson's *Essay* in the letter to Mendelssohn of January 9, 1771 (XVII, 364).
The sociological-historical perspective of the Scot, combined with progress optimism, strengthens Lessing's sense that he had perhaps unjustly dismissed much of history as "refuse" — and that it could in fact be integrated at a higher level. He no longer proceeds merely from optimism about progress but from a radical theodicy (this significance of Ferguson's influence was already noted by Leisegang, *Lessings Weltanschauung*, 114ff.).
2787 *Erziehung*, § 82 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 433.
2788 *op. cit.*, §§ 85–89 = XIII, 433f.

questions, the conflict between the causal and the normative shifts to another level – namely, to that of action theory or moral philosophy. Lessing logically understood the dilemma and, apparently, also experienced it himself. For he notes, regarding the mystics of the 13th and 14th centuries: "The enthusiast often takes very correct views about the future, but he cannot wait for that future. He wishes for that future to come sooner; and wishes that it be hastened by him. What nature takes millennia to accomplish should ripen in the moment of his existence.[2789]" When Lessing defends Reimarus's right to biblical criticism, it is because he believes humanity stands on the threshold of the "new eternal gospel" and no longer or at least less than before needs the "letter." On the other hand, he does not deny that orthodoxy still provides education and discipline for many people, and moreover contains aspects that are above any rational criticism. Therefore, he also reproaches Reimarus with the following: "Sentences without which Christianity cannot stand... and sentences which one merely adds for the better connection of the inserted…" are one for him.[2790] However, he himself does not dare to make a binding, detailed statement about what in the scripture is "spirit" and what is merely "letter," and in this, his necessarily ambiguous position is reflected.

Even after he has arrived at the reconciling insights of the *Erziehungsschrift*, he still adheres to the ideal of the rational religion, not only with regard to its future realization in accordance with his developmental-historical schema but also because of the polemic against orthodoxy, which he cannot forgo, as he rightly fears that such silence would not simply be interpreted as insight into the objective function of orthodoxy but as agreement with its subjective standpoint or self-understanding. Whoever has a clear view of the course of history is necessarily in opposition to those who represent the current phase of development without knowing that it is merely a temporary phase. The one who knows, however, not only knows that it is temporary but also that it is inevitable, and thus at least psychologically finds himself in a dilemma because he must leave the fulfillment of the present historical tasks to those who are not as farsighted as he is. So, when Lessing thinks of the necessity of the current phase, he places the realization of the rational ideal in the

2789 *op. cit.*, § 90 = XIII, 434.
2790 *Gegensätze*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XII, 438.

future. But when he considers its temporary nature, he becomes impatient, just like the enthusiast of the 13th century, and counters the existing state with his critique in the name of the unclouded rational ideal. The character of the promoted rational religion differs in each of the two cases. In the first case, the mature reason speaks, not as a mere contrast to sensuality or the necessary sensualization of the ideal but as its non-coercive overcoming in the "third age of the world." In the second case, by contrast, reason presents itself directly in polemic opposition to the positive, which does not leave much room for the educational value of orthodoxy:[2791] exactly this is implied by the call to return to the simplicity of early Christianity. Lessing adopts this stance as late as 1780 when he claims that the religion of Christ and the Christian religion are "two completely different things";[2792] not coincidentally, he emphasizes the same point in his polemic against Goeze: "Who will finally bring us a Christianity, as you [Luther] would teach it now; as Christ himself would teach it![2793]". This leads to the differing viewpoint of the *Erziehungsschrift* compared to *Nathan*. In *Nathan*, all positive religions are treated equally in relation to the rational or humanist religion, which is contrasted here and now with the still flourishing orthodoxy, while in the developmental perspective of the *Erziehungsschrift*, they are seen as succeeding each other — in other words: in *Nathan*, Judaism and Christianity are parallel phenomena whose dogmatic differences are not of much interest — the inclusion of Islam makes this indifference even more apparent—while in the *Erziehungsschrift*, Christianity is clearly superior to Judaism. Nathan's humanist religion does not mean the abolition or overcoming of positive religions, but only the neutralization of their purely positive aspects and the merging of their rational cores; it exists alongside the positive religions, which are condemned and fought to the extent that they threaten to smother the rational with the positive (Patriarch, Daja). In the *Erziehungsschrift*, rational religion prevails after the positive religions have exhausted their educational role and left the historical stage. The meaning of the theory of the three ages is directly opposed to that of the "Ring Parable."

2791 See the fine analysis by Thielicke, *Offenbarung, Vernunft und Existenz*, 64ff., 123ff.

2792 *Die Religion Christi*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XVI, 518f.

2793 *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 102.

Lessing leaves no doubt that reason in history means the same as divine providence. God directs events purposefully, through which His presence in the world is manifested.[2794] The conviction that God is present even where the devil would be expected ("God would have His hand in everything: except in our errors?[2795]") stems from that belief which Lessing himself found not radical enough in Pope: everything is good. In the historical-philosophical perspective, this is equivalent to the thesis that reason is embedded in positive revelation as if it were its *entelechy*. However, since the historical-philosophical confidence in the future is gained by invoking God, an ontological extension of the philosophy of history is likely, because the question of how God acts in history directly relates to the question of His nature.[2796] Is the "everything is good" to be understood merely in the dualistic sense, that everything individual is directed by the externally acting teleology of a God, who is strictly transcendent in relation to the world, to fulfill divine plans? Some formulations by Lessing suggest that he thinks anthropomorphically ("if God had not wanted...," "why would God have used a completely natural means..."),[2797] Nevertheless, his spontaneous monistic intent is unmistakable, aiming to deepen the relationship between God and the world in order to ontologically solidify the determinism of freedom. The fulfillment of the plan of providence is not merely the result of the sovereign divine will (we recall Lessing's rejection of the voluntarist God), but the necessary outflow of the divine essence. As the essence of God is thought not least in relation to phases, details, sensual bindings, etc., of the plan of providence, it emerges from its rigid simplicity to encompass this whole multiplicity, thus ontologically promoting the fulfillment of the said plan. The unity of God must "be a transcendental unity, which does not exclude a form of plurality." But in this plurality, God does not dissolve. Since it belongs to His essence to have a complete idea of Himself, which is "as necessarily real as He

2794 *Erziehung*, § 91 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 434.

2795 *op. cit*., Vorbericht = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 415.

2796 It is Leisegang's merit to have worked out the close connection between ontology and philosophy of history in Lessing (*Lessings Weltanschauung*, 129). However, his view that Lessing's entire thought could be unified under this perspective (e.g., 96) remains incorrect.

2797 *Erziehung*, §§ 7, 34 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 417, 423.

Himself," He doubles and thus begets a Son from eternity. This Son encompasses all the perfections of the Father within Himself; at the same time, however, He is independent, and within His scope, the plan of providence is enacted, the completion of which causes individual imperfections to disappear within the perfection of the whole. This interpretation suggests the formulation of Lessing that God thinks of His Son as "the independent scope of all His [God's] perfections, against which and within which every imperfection of the individual disappears," especially since in this passage, the transition of humanity from "inability" to morality and moral happiness–thus the fulfillment of the plan of providence–is thematized.[2798]

Now, we might be able to better understand the deeper connection between the ontological and the phenomenological structures. The bridge that the Son builds between transcendence and immanence on the ontological level corresponds exactly to the dual relationship between reason and revelation in the community. The positive revelation is, insofar as it contains reason, simultaneously a revelation of God in the absolute sense, although this must remain hidden to the sensually affected human, given the current phase of their education, which requires heteronomy or transcendence. (The positive teachings can only be understood in their reasonable, i.e., esoteric, sense at the dawn of the era of the new Gospel.)[2799] As the careful distinction between God and Son shows, Lessing thus carefully avoids exhausting the revelation in the absolute sense in the community or in nature. Therefore, he will not become a Spinozist, but the unification approach naturally brings him close to that free Spinozism which supports the radically optimistic stance on the ontological meaning of the divinity of the world, while at the same time retreating from the moralistic standpoint on the personality of God, or wanting to completely abandon it. The free Spinozism could, due to its content vagueness, be pieced together from mixed material and achieved through various indirect routes. Lessing himself represented it when he knew little about Spinoza, and even when he explicitly rejected him. Even in the fragment "The Christianity of Reason" from 1753, in which Leibniz-Wolffian and Aristotelian thought is merged with motifs from Renaissance natural philosophy,

2798 *op. cit.*, §§ 73, 75 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 430f.
2799 *op. cit.*, § 72 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 430.

the approach to free Spinozism becomes noticeable. It says here that in God, thought, will, and action are one. To avoid identifying God and the world, Lessing immediately adds that God can think in two ways: either all at once or in parts.[2800] In the former case, He creates a Son, who is "an identical image" of God;[2801] in the latter, the world is created, where the divided perfections follow each other continuously (chain of beings).[2802] The simple beings form "similarly limited gods"; they resemble God "as parts resemble the whole".[2803] (The distinction and similarity with the theses of the *Erziehungsschrift* are immediately evident. In it, a single concept or doubling of God is spoken of, which generates the Son and thus, obviously, also the world: the relationship between God and the world is thus partially closer. On the other hand, it was already in the fragment from 1753 that the Son and the world had something in common, insofar as both stemmed from the same essential characteristic of God, namely the ability to represent oneself.)

The defense of the personality of God later takes the form of a sharp contrast between Leibniz and Spinoza. Spinoza is the thinker of absolute identity; body and soul are for him "one and the same single thing," and therefore, he does not face the problem of harmonizing the two, which arises for Leibniz, who insists on their ontological difference and therefore cannot even be a Spinozist, despite seeming to use Spinozist expressions: this is the thesis of the draft "Through Spinoza, Leibniz only came upon the track of preordained harmony" from 1763.[2804] Already in 1755, Lessing knew the cosmological dimension of the body-soul problem, as in "Pope a Metaphysician!" he rejects the view that Spinoza considers God as the soul of the world, thus separate from it[2805] (Spinoza is here referred to as a "blasphemous heretic," and his system as "dangerous"). In 1773, Lessing once again aligns with the idea of creation, i.e., in the denial of pantheism, the "soul" of Leibniz's philosophy.[2806] However, what is important for us is that at this time, Lessing still insists that a world outside of God

2800 §§ 3–4 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 175.
2801 *op. cit.*, § 8 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 176
2802 *op. cit.*, § 16 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 177.
2803 *op. cit.*, § 22 = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 178.
2804 *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 294–296.
2805 *Sämtliche Schriften* VI, 437.
2806 *Des Andreas Wissowatius Einwürfe*, *Sämtliche Schriften* XII, 94.

cannot exist ex definitione, as shown in the short essay "On the Reality of Things Outside of God," which must have been written in 1763. Here, as in "Christianity of Reason," Lessing identifies thought and creation in God, which implies that the concept of God encompasses everything that in the reality of things outside of God can be encountered: "thus both realities are one, and everything that is to exist outside of God exists in God." Lessing does not accept that there is an archetype in God that corresponds to something outside of him, while on the other hand, he says that the things in God are still "sufficiently distinguished" from him.[2807] This schema illustrates Lessing's dual stance, which, as shown, has been modified several times. One of these modifications can be found in the *Erziehungsschrift*.

I would like to conclude this necessarily lengthy excursus on the complexity of Lessing's thought with two points that clearly highlight Leibniz's contribution to the formation of the first structures of the Union Philosophy in the German Enlightenment. We have seen that in Leibniz, "optimism" and "meliorism" exist side by side. In light of the attempt in the *Erziehungsschrift* to connect the idea of the whole with that of development, it is highly interesting to note that Lessing was very aware of the parallel existence of the two models in Leibniz, as well as the resultant task of reconciliation. He speaks of "the two hypotheses of the perfection of the world, the uniform as well as the growing," and describes their seemingly already harmonized treatment by Leibniz as follows: "For the whole could thus at any moment have that perfection to which, according to the other hypothesis, it only ever approaches, without ever reaching it; and I do not see why it should not have been the most suitable for eternal wisdom. But the possibility that the infinite number of finite beings could, from the outset, be brought into the most perfect connection they are capable of, is not only granted by Leibniz, but he also defends it against the accusation of always being the same; by showing that even if the exact degree of total perfection remains, the individual perfections would nonetheless change incessantly".[2808] The connection

2807 *Sämtliche Schriften* XIV, 292f. — Not without reason did Herder quote this draft fully at the end of *Gott* (XVI, 579f.) to show that for Lessing "Spinoza's system was no joke." Herder could suspect Spinozism here only because he himself interpreted Spinoza very freely (see next section).

2808 *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen* = *Sämtliche Schriften* XI, 478, 476 (from

between these theses and Lessing's interpretation and defense of the doctrine of eternal punishments need not be discussed here. Nevertheless, the theory of *palingenesis* established in the *Erziehungsschrift*[2809] shows that Lessing was not willing to let his apocalyptic optimism be tainted by adopting an orthodox standpoint on this issue. The same mood resonates in the 1780 draft "*That More Than Five Senses Can Exist for Man"*, in which, by the way, the doctrine of *palingenesis* or metempsychosis is once again taken up.[2810] Basic aspects of Leibniz's soul theory here provide Lessing with an opportunity to complete his melioristic view through a genetic perspective. The soul is, of course, a simple being (the idea of the unified whole is never relinquished), but it attains its ideas "gradually"; "since nature never makes a leap, the soul will have gone through all the lower stages before it reaches the one on which it now finds itself".[2811] From this, it is concluded that the soul is capable of an infinite perfection through the acquisition of new senses, without its essence needing to change. The genetic consideration and the emphasis on the role of the senses (they are the "order" and the "measure" by which the acquisition of ideas is determined) within the Leibniz-derived *lex continui* certainly testify to the previously mentioned fusion of Leibniz and Locke after the decline of Wolffianism. Even more interesting is the obvious parallelism between the genetic consideration of knowledge, while maintaining the unity of the soul, and the development perspective in the history of humankind. In the progress of education, collective consciousness gradually awakens in a specific order, just as the individual attains its wealth of ideas gradually. Clear and distinct ideas stand at the end of a development that takes place within the framework of a whole, namely, innate and only gradually discovered possibilities. Thus, we are already within the circle of Herderian questions.

c) Herder

Through Herder, the monistic approach of the German

1773).

2809 §§ 94 ff. = *Sämtliche Schriften* XIII, 435f.

2810 *Sämtliche Schriften* XVI, 525.

2811 *loc. cit.* 522.

Enlightenment reaches its most mature expression, at least until 1795. The demand for union is, for Herder, simply self-evident—and likewise, its anti-intellectualist sharpness, which is honed through a generous and almost joyful rehabilitation of sensuality at all levels. In other words, Herder is free from all inhibitions that the spirit of Wolffian intellectualism had managed to keep alive in the thinking of the previous generation in various forms. This concretely means: Herder sets aside both Wolff and any polemics against him, like those by Crusius, with a single stroke. He grows up at the threshold of a new phase and looks only ahead, without caring about the old disputes in detail. Therefore, he represents—rather: embodies—the new movement with his characteristic sovereignty and ease. With regard to the thinking of Hölderlin's generation, his great achievement lies in the fact that, through the extraction and concise formulation of the union tendency, he created commonplaces upon which the younger generation could continue to build, without having to reexamine the sources or get lost in philosophical controversies from the start; Hölderlin's generation did not need to rediscover Leibniz, for they possessed ready-made templates to which they could link, in order to temporarily satisfy their apocalyptic desires. Herder was able to formulate the new movement so usefully because, as mentioned, he was simply integrated with it. The fundamental aspects of his intellectual disposition emerge quickly and without painful changes; when later he fluctuates between differing theoretical possibilities (humanitarian ideal vs. historicism, the nature and extent of God's involvement in history), this happens because of objectively given ambiguities in his position, not due to a change in it. The restlessness, indeed the torment, of Lessing is absent here, and in its place stands the grand effort to shape the fundamentally established, which, moreover, can already be reconstructed in terms of content and sources based on his early writings.

The strong influence of Hamann on the young Herder is a striking indicator of the intellectual-historical significance of religious sentimental philosophy, and specifically, that the anti-intellectualism it triggered could, under certain circumstances, be merged with the rehabilitation of sensuality in the broader Enlightenment sense, which was even supported by materialists. To avoid skepticism, etc., the signs had to be radically changed, of course. Hamann had done this with

Hume, and Herder, who would apply this strategy on an even larger scale than Hamann, was familiar with and in agreement with Hume's reception.[2812] In 1766, he summarized the *Natural History of Religion* in fifteen sections, noting the decisive role of passion in the formation of religion, as well as the fundamental difference between mere "speculative curiosity" and the "sensation of life.[2813]" From this sentimental philosophical perspective, Herder now evaluates both contemporary philosophy and the task of philosophy in general. Although he still refers to philosophical systems as "fictions" and "poems" in a review from 1772,[2814] which concludes with an extensive quote from Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia* on the complete independence of reason and faith from each other, he does not advocate for the abolition of philosophy, but rather that it become simple, direct, and useful. "You, philosopher, and you, plebeian! Form an alliance to be useful!" is the forward-looking phrase. For this purpose, logic and all the "sad remnants of the Aristotelian sourdough" are completely useless and are accordingly treated by Herder, with logic and mathematics being considered symptoms of the same illness. Only "weaker philosophy" expresses itself mathematically; in philosophy, too, the age of mathematics should give way to the age of physics, just as Newton followed Descartes.[2815] This assessment of the mathematical methodology, whose intellectual-historical background we are familiar with, remained true to Herder throughout his life.[2816] However, he had Wolff in mind, from whose

2812 About Herder and Hamann, see Haym, *Herder* I, 54ff., 137ff., 494ff.; and II, 387ff.; about Herder and Hume, I, 287, 323.

2813 *Sämtliche Werke* XXXII, 193; cf. *Journal*, *Sämtliche Werke* IV, 356ff. (Hume is mentioned at p. 361). Later Herder repeatedly uses these theses to prove that religion is not a product of priestly fraud, see *Auch eine Philosophie*, SW V, 486, and especially *Älteste Urkunde*, SW VI, 284f., 307 etc.

2814 SW V, 461f.

2815 *Wie die Philosophie zum Besten des Volkes allgemeiner und nützlicher werden kann* (written 1765), SW XXXII, 51, 49, 37f., 32f. The typical Enlightenment opposition between Descartes and Newton is found again in *Ideen*, SW XIII, 22.

2816 See for example *Gott*, SW XVI, 432, 464. On the intellectual and logical connection between anti-mathematical attitude and the turn to history in the Enlightenment generally, we have already spoken (cf. above, Chapter VI, Section 4b). Also in Germany, rejection of Wolffianism (already before Herder) was a prerequisite for the historical approach (see Reill, *Enlightenment and the*

"evidence in words" he says it could only generate "arbitrary definitions" and "disgustingly repeated demonstrations.[2817]"

Our previous assessment of the Baumgartenian approach is confirmed in the way it was taken up by the young Herder.[2818] Although Herder sees the "first mistake" of Baumgarten's aesthetics in the fact that "it takes everything too much a priori and as if it comes from thin air, and thus also loses itself in the air of general statements, etc.,"[2819] he still perceives true liveliness behind the Wolffian shell, which is already evident through the emphasis on the concept of sensual knowledge. Herder refers to the poetic vein of the young Baumgarten and notes that Baumgarten became a Wolffian at a time when this philosophy still seemed a promising, enticing heresy for restless minds.[2820] Baumgarten had walked through those "foggy regions," which Wolff called the domain of the lower forces, with "his own sharp intellect" to "search for everything poetic in sensuality, in imagination, ... in feeling and passion," which was all the more commendable because "it is precisely in this dark ground that my entire feeling for the beautiful and good lies.[2821]" The human soul, according to Baumgarten, "lies before us, in its most sensual, that is, its most active and liveliest part, like a vast ocean ...: there I place you, o philosopher of feeling, like on a high rock in the midst of the waves. Now look into the dark abyss of the human soul, where the sensations of the animal become the sensations of a human being," etc.[2822] The final sentence of this quote reveals the critical point where the insight into the significance of psychological sensuality is expanded by the entanglement of psychological and biological sensuality. This vital

Rise of Historicism, 56ff., 65ff.).

2817 About Wolff's writings, SW XXXII, 157.

2818 On Herder's respect for Baumgarten's work see Haym, *Herder* I, 41, 172ff., 251.

2819 *Von Baumgartens Denkart in seinen Schriften*, SW XXXII, 191.

2820 *loc. cit.* 183f. Cf. our earlier discussion about the reasons for the spread of Wolffianism in this chapter, Section 2a.

2821 *loc. cit.* 185.

2822 *loc. cit.* 186; Herder's emphasis. The frequent and emphatic use of the words "sinnlich" and "Sinnlichkeit" is noticeable in most of Herder's writings. One main shortcoming of Wolffianism, for Herder, is that it has no understanding for the "darkest regions" of the soul (*Über Wolffs Schriften*, SW XXXII, 157).

shift is made in the monistic attempt to treat the unified soul in its unity with all dimensions of nature, which is permeated by the same principles, and thus explain and enhance its liveliness: "The principle alone: imitate nature! mostly leads to dead representations; but the principle: feel the sensual perfection within you! gently collects the rays of the whole of nature into my soul, and it is nothing but the application of that oracle: O man! know thyself![2823]" This self-knowledge, which was esteemed by Pietism and Hamann, thus gains a new meaning and is connected with a different anthropology.

The emphatic inclusion of the deeper, unconscious dimensions of existence in Herder's consideration also brings with it a highly significant methodological consequence. Since the perfection of aesthetic or moral appearance, or norms, is never to be questioned, while on the other hand, their rooting in a "dark ground" is asserted, conceptually, the path must be followed that connects root and peak—otherwise, one of the two theses put forward by Herder must fall away. The genetic consideration must, therefore, gain the upper hand over the merely descriptive one, or: the descriptive can only take place after the completion of the genetic, while it must incorporate the results and, furthermore, the flexibility of the latter.[2824] It is evident that the methodological difference accompanies the divergence in the ontological fundamental stance. For Herder, the descriptive method and intellectualism are one and the same, as the latter treats the ontological, moral, etc., entities as *entia rationis* that cannot have

2823 *Von Baumgartens Denkart*, SW XXXII, 188.

2824 This attitude explains why Herder always refrained from a fundamental polemic against Locke. On the contrary, in his epistemological essays he uses formulations directly inspired by Locke ("All our thinking arises from and through sensation, and despite all distillation, still bears rich traces of it," *Vom Erkennen* etc., 2nd Attempt, VIII, 233f.), and even tries to reconcile Leibniz's and Locke's views on innate ideas: the dispute, he claims, arose only from mutual misunderstanding. He proposes to resolve it by assuming that what is innate is not specific ideas, but "the power to recognize according to the image of divinity" or the divine spark in us (1st version, VIII, 247f., cf. later in the *Ideen*, XIII, 308). What is theoretically gained by this is unclear, but clear is Herder's wish to hold onto empiricism without sacrificing the moral. From this also springs his attempt to mediate between Leibniz and Locke (even in 1801, in the *Adrastea*, he calls Leibniz the "complementer" of Locke, XXIII, 132). See also the good observations of Haym, *Herder* II, 667f.

existence. From this arises the "convenient" "tabular method,[2825]" which is exhausted in classifications, divisions, and "empty names." Against this superficial approach, Herder, through his rehabilitation of sensuality, rejects the static ontology and methodology of intellectualism, contrasting it with a "completely philosophical language," which must, in fact, be "the language of the gods"—the gods "who watched as the things of the world took shape, who beheld the beings in their state of becoming and emergence, and thus created every name of a thing genetically and materially.[2826]" When we place next to the genetic consideration and the rehabilitation of sensuality the idea of an unchanging essence despite all becoming and the unwavering belief in the norm, we get Herder's fusion of the idea of the whole with the development idea—a fusion that caters to both fundamental needs of his stance: on the one hand, the enlightenment empirical-scientific thinking is taken seriously, and on the other hand, the normative is solidified precisely by being embedded into the depths of the sensual itself. When sensuality is thus conceived or endowed with solid dimensions, its deepening, while adhering to the requirements of enlightenment science, does not strengthen but rather directly refutes any materialism and all skepticism. Spirit and matter, being and ought, the causal and the normative, the whole and development are now thought together, serving to underpin the described stance in its dual aspect.

This fundamental structure determines— as we will still show— Herder's thinking on the anthropological, cosmological, and historical levels. It, however, early arises from the considerations and questions analyzed here. For example, we find it in the 1769 publication of the fourth "Critical Forests," and in a developed form. To substantiate his thesis of the presence of an innate capacity in humans for the sensation of beauty, Herder here starts from the assumption that we are "as if animal-like spirits," meaning our soul has "more specific measures for a sensual being than for a pure spirit"; even the great number of our sensory organs "and the great wealth of their influxes show, so to speak, the great mass of sensuality in human nature.[2827]" At the beginning of its development, man is "only a thinking and feeling

2825 *Von Baumgartens Denkart*, SW XXXII, 182.
2826 *loc. cit.* 180; Herder's emphasis.
2827 SW IV, 27f.

plant," and even when he becomes an animal, "it seems to him that no sensation accompanies him except the vague idea of his self...; in it, however, lie the concepts of the entire universe; from it develop all the ideas of man, etc.[2828]" Subsequently, the development or branching of this all-encompassing innate or immanent being is outlined, showing how certain stages must be passed through until man reaches clear and distinct concepts (in this case, aesthetic taste). The sensual conditioning of the soul involves not only the necessity of its development (the pure intellect must remain unmoved), but also its overwhelming diversity, as each individual soul is differently affected by the respective environment. The variety of tastes and values creates the impression that there is no binding connection. However, Herder is not willing to concede "that everything in nature is a chaos of individual disharmonious moods that would never be able to harmonize... For he thinks of it in terms of the fact that the modifications of development can never destroy the original all-encompassing capacity; 'as soon as it allows a deviation, it is precisely through it that the main rule is newly determined and reinforced.[2829]" The essence of the entire construction, in which the whole and development, or the normative and causal, are intertwined, is clear: the relative or sensually conditioned should be interpreted so that no relativism or skepticism can arise from it. To simply oppose the relative with the sheer steadfastness of the intellect or to relegate it to silence was, at this stage of the Enlightenment, obviously too late. The rehabilitation of sensuality was an unstoppable process, and Herder's decisive insight is that the normative, under these circumstances, could no longer simply be opposed to sensuality, but must be "rescued" through its "sublation" within a new metaphysics.

As already hinted, the young Herder incorporates the factor of "sensuality" into his considerations to a much greater extent than can be explained solely by the influence of Hamann's emotional philosophy, in which primarily the pessimistic sensuality, the inner struggle, and personal experiences on the path to God came to the fore. However, Herder does not seem inclined to connect Hamann's fully accepted evaluation of the role of passions with thoughts like those of the doctrine of original sin and the corresponding pessimistic diet. His

2828 *loc. cit.* 28f.
2829 *loc. cit.* 38f.

anthropology is optimistic, and therefore, his rehabilitation of sensuality can be far-reaching. His literary sources, in this regard, are Winkelmann and above all, Shaftesbury. The former finds the ideal balance, or the perfect mutual penetration of spirit and sensuality, represented in the works of Greek art. The pagan life joy, which more or less belongs to this portrayal, naturally points in a completely different anthropological direction than the doctrine of original sin. It is well known that, according to the needs of his historical construction, Herder had to distance himself from Winkelmann's absolutization of Greek norms. However, in his early years, Winkelmann's ideal of Greek proportions played a significant role in the development of his view on the intertwining of spirit and sensuality.[2830] His essay on Baumgarten, in which, as we know, aesthetics in the original sense of the word (and Herder understood it this way)[2831] comes into its own, ends with the demand for "Greek feeling," "Greek aesthetics," and "Hellenizing.' Winkelmann's guiding principles could now be harmonized with Shaftesbury's Platonism (the term often simply referred to the Greek ideal or spiritualized sensuality par excellence) under a common denominator. The advantage of the Englishman lay, of course, in the versatility of his thinking, namely, in the metaphysical grounding of the values that the ideal of Greek proportions was supposed to embody. The radically optimistic ontology is reflected here in an analogously conceived anthropology, and this connection must have sprung from Herder's innermost ideas and wishes. Only within the framework of this optimistic anthropology was Shaftesbury's combination of aesthetics with the moral possible, which Herder fully embraced.[2832]

The simultaneous eager engagement of Herder with Leibniz provides a clear proof of his early aim to place his aesthetic, moral, anthropological, etc. views into a coherent metaphysical framework, thereby giving them a final justification: the polemical-ideological function of the idea of the whole, the principles it governs, which should ultimately be identical with the normative basic attitude and form its ontological confirmation, is well-known to us. From this

2830 On Herder's relation to Winckelmann, see Haym, *Herder* I, 140, 195f., II, 74ff.

2831 *Von Baumgartens Denkart*, SW XXXII, 192.

2832 *4. Kritische Wälder*, SW IV, 35f.

perspective, it should come as no surprise that in his "Wahrheiten aus Leibniz" (1769), Herder begins by emphasizing the thesis that the universe is "a whole, whose parts are all closely connected" and that "into which alone only this individual, as it is, fits perfectly".[2833] By contrast, intellectualism (Wolff), which "wants to assume the imagination of all elements," lets the unity of the whole fall into a living and a dead part. The theory of small perceptions, on the other hand, asserts the unity in two ways: firstly, because it presents each individual as the epitome of the universe, and secondly, because it sees the universe as a rising sequence of individuals possessing perceptions of varying degrees of clarity. "Thus, the present is full of the future, and full of the past: the whole is one; everything fits together, and God reads in the smallest of substances the entire sequence of the things of the world." "Nature never makes a leap. Always from the small to the great, and vice versa, through the medium in stages, like parts.[2834]" When we combine the two views of the unity of the universe, it again results, following Leibnizian concepts, in the intertwining of the idea of the whole with the idea of development, which allows Herder to view each individual both as a part and as a stage of the whole at the end of the passage just quoted.[2835] Under these circumstances, the celebratory praise of individuality (as Herder performs in contrast to the mathematical "uniformity")[2836] does not call the idea of the whole into question, but rather enriches it with the idea of development: for development only makes sense as a sequence of individually recognizable forms, but since each of them should grasp the whole both as structure and as law, their diversity will not result in chaos, just as development will not lead to a simple movement in this or that direction, but rather a constantly purposeful progression.

In the theory of small perceptions, Herder also finds confirmation of his views on the "dark ground" of the soul, in which sensual and spiritual elements can no longer be distinguished. The more striking is his insistence on the fundamental ontological heterogeneity of thought and matter: the former "follows not at all"

2833 SW XXXII, 211.

2834 *loc. cit.* 215.

2835 On the central importance of this double perspective for later dialectics, see Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, 494, note, 590f.

2836 *Wahrheiten aus Leibniz*, SW XXXII, 216.

from the latter.[2837] We sense here the concern that the union approach could ultimately be interpreted in a materialistic sense. To avoid this, Herder completely refrains from using the dualistic argument, although his main strategy for combating materialism lies in the establishment of a monism with reversed premises, or in the complete spiritualization of matter. The reason for this wavering is not logical, but rather psychological; for with the development of the consistent identity philosophy through the neo-Kantians, this ambiguity disappears entirely. As long as the new monistic construction remains loose, its proponents do not dare to abolish the ontological independence of thought along with that of matter, even though they undermine it in practice, only to remind themselves of it when the danger or accusation of materialism arises on their horizon. This back-and-forth shapes the worldview of the early Schiller and his admirers in the Tübingen Stift.[2838] Herder will never free himself from this, which is why he will also avoid radically abolishing the personal God. Leibniz thus appears not only because he provides union structures, but also because one can always point to his "nisi intellectus ipse" to silence those who smell Spinozism and materialism behind the union approach. Herder also understands the innate ideas, i.e., ideas not dependent on any sensuality, as a weapon against skepticism in science[2839] and in morality, which, like arithmetic, requires proof.[2840] However, his effort is once again visible, as he strives not to fall into a new intellectualism (it is telling that in Leibniz's famous formula, he replaces the word "intellect" with "soul"),[2841] and to justify the necessity of the innate from the perspective of the union approach, where the innate and the unconscious, as in Leibniz, coincide and the anti-intellectualism is once again promoted in the fight against Locke's empiricism.[2842]

It is due to this strong dominance of the monistic and simultaneously anti-intellectual tendency that the ontological heterogeneity of thought and matter is only recalled in cases of

2837 *loc. cit.* 217.
2838 Kondylis, *Entstehung der Dialektik*, chapter I.
2839 *Wahrheiten aus Leibniz*, SW XXXII, 212, 219.
2840 *loc. cit.* 221f.
2841 *loc. cit.* 224.
2842 *loc. cit.* 214.

emergency, and that even those aspects of Leibniz's philosophy, which were primarily intended as a bulwark against Spinozism, are attacked. According to Herder, the absolute independence or windowlessness of the monadic substances unnecessarily destroys the unity or simplicity of being, and furthermore, it complicates the explanation of the variety and change in each individual monad itself. The monads would therefore "have to relate to each other by their nature," i.e., they must be "communicable".[2843] If the "cause of connection" is not immanent, then "a Deus ex machina must be called," who would have to contain it: but it is a contradiction if the cause of connection cannot be found in the things to be connected themselves. "It seems to me that the world would be much simpler and more varied if the cause of its connection and all its changes were in each monad," this is the result of these reflections.[2844] So Herder expects the deepening of the union ("simpler") to enrich the diversity ("more varied"), which would arise from the expanded sphere of activity and interaction of the individual substance. As mentioned, the enhancement of the latter means the elimination of the deus ex machina, but since the same enhancement occurs through the deepening of the union, it implies an increase in the presence of the divine in the universe (since: fragmented being, in turn, necessitates God's intervention from the outside). Nevertheless, Herder continues to insist on the independence of God, and by wanting to combine this with the aforementioned thesis, he arrives at the panentheistic construct that he also presents in his mature writings. "God therefore belongs to the world: as the world belongs to God"; "the world has existed eternally"; "there is no God without the world: just as there is no world without God";[2845] all this would mean pure and not just free Spinozism if Herder had not added that God does not constitute the universe, but its center, and that "other necessary beings exist besides the most perfect being." Spinoza was actually not an atheist, since he only believed that everything existed in God, but he thought only of the center of the universe, which he called God and world, and not of the whole as such.[2846] In fact, it is difficult to understand why someone could overlook a whole and focus

2843 On Leibniz's *Grundsätze*, SW XXXII, 225.
2844 *loc. cit.* 227.
2845 *Grundsätze der Philosophie*, SW XXXII, 228.
2846 ibid.

exclusively on its center from the outset. Nevertheless, the rescue of Spinoza, even through this questionable detour, clearly expresses Herder's concerns. While he wants to deepen the union ontology as much as possible, he does not hesitate to distance himself from Leibniz, but on the other hand, he dares not draw the final consequences all the way through, even though the temptation to do so is overwhelming. The personal God in this or that version, just like the recognition of the independence of reason, is still regarded as a guarantee for the binding nature of certain values in cases of emergency. It is only after 1794, through Hölderlin, that the union philosophy will free itself from such reservations and limitations.

When Herder questions the *deus ex machina*, he is naturally considering the entire construction of the pre-established harmony. Given the structural parallelism of the cosmological and anthropological levels in his thinking, this criticism emerges in the presentation of his epistemology in the treatise "*Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele"* (On the Knowledge and Perception of the Human Soul). Regarding the "unnatural poverty" of the pre-established harmony, "there is nothing to say," and in fact, the reason that might have led Leibniz to it is hard to imagine, as it is stated here.[2847] In the first version of the treatise, this construction is presented as a random product of a "witty head" and not of the philosopher "who was aware of his system"; the "true" system of Leibniz is therefore to be found elsewhere. Herder's counter-concept is based on two assumptions. The unity of soul and body is necessary for establishing a connection between the soul and the world (Herder thus directly applies his thesis of the communicability of monads): "The soul, by its divine nature, being restricted, needs senses to reflect the universe in accordance with its divine nature." The soul needs the senses not only because of its restriction but also because of its divinity! Were it not rooted in the divine, its connection to the world would not be such a self-evident demand. In this thought, the second assumption that underpins Herder's rejection of the pre-established harmony already resonates. If the unity of soul and body stems from and serves the divine nature and purpose of the soul, it means the animation of the body, not a degradation of the soul. In other words, the unity is in the sign of the soul. The aforementioned passage

2847 SW VIII, 176.

continues as follows: "The body, in relation to the soul, is not a body: it is her realm: an aggregate of many dimly represented forces, from which she collects her image, the clear thought... The basis of the aggregate from the body I find only in the soul: and in the body, the reason why the soul awakens from these and those forms the pure universe that lies in it. In short, the body is a symbol, phenomena of the soul in relation to the universe.[2848]" Herder believes that the pre-established harmony, along with its dualism, can be dispelled if the possibility of a monistic view, while simultaneously spiritualizing matter to disperse the suspicion of materialism, is present, and he cannot understand why Leibniz, whose monadology provides exactly this possibility, would want to retain dualism.[2849]

In the *Monadology*, Herder finds the *lex continui* as the dynamic reverse and confirmation of the idea of the unified whole in general. The theses: "in nature, nothing is separated" and "the inner person, with all their dark forces, impulses, and drives, is only one" thus belong together.[2850] The stimulus connects to the outer world, the senses process it from within, and the "nervous structure" ("delicate silver bands, by which the creator links the inner and outer world, and within us, heart and head, thinking and willing, senses and all limbs")[2851] transmits the results of this processing of the imagination, which "is not only the bond and foundation of all finer soul powers but also the knot of the connection between spirit and body".[2852] When drives, feelings, and thought emerge directly from it, the "seed to all passion and enterprise" already lies in "the depths of the

2848 *loc. cit.* 249f.

2849 The spiritualization of matter is such a strong retroactive movement in Herder's monistic undertaking that he even unhesitatingly adopts ideas that could easily be interpreted materialistically, e.g., what he writes about "Physiognomy in the broadest sense, i.e., psychological physiology": it is "the most important part of philosophy... Without all mysticism and in the sharpest philosophical sense, the inner man inhabits the outer through and through" (*loc. cit.* 250). Just think of Lombroso's theories in *L'uomo delinquente* under the influence of late 19th-century vulgar materialism, to see what Herder's "psychological physiology" could mean if you flip the value-signs.

2850 *loc. cit.* 178.

2851 *loc. cit.* 190.

2852 As shown in the *Ideen*, SW XIII, 307f.

stimulus and such dark forces in humans and animals"[2853] (these forces are even called "the deepest sanctuary within us").[2854] For Herder, such a statement means that sensuality is spiritualized in its diversity; "a spiritual bond," which "depends on no mechanics," connects the stimulus with the outer world (this explains why the body is attracted or repelled by something), and likewise, "a certain spiritual bond" between the senses and their corresponding objects forms the necessary bridge.[2855] The rule of reason, i.e., "the monarch who thinks and wills within us," is justified by the fact that "our entire body, in its various parts, is so manifoldly ensouled, seems only one realm of invisible, inner, but less bright and dark forces, which is in the most exact connection" with reason.[2856] Herder then asks: "What could be more natural than that she [reason] rules over them, without which she would not be what she is?" One could, however, reply that a truly indisputable rule cannot be based on the ruler's dependence on their subjects, as Herder implies here. In this doubtful argument lies, in reality, his aporia: alongside the intellectualist conception of the nature of the spirit, he has also had to relinquish its intellectualist rule over sensuality (the spiritualization of sensuality—at least in this phase of the German late enlightenment—is not a return to intellectualism but an attempt to replace it without falling into materialism), without, however, wanting to question the stated goal of that rule, namely morality and freedom. Those who consider the "birth of our reason" described by Herder "indecent" and revere reason as "an ingrained, eternal, independent, unfailing oracle"[2857] are rebuked with the same emphasis as the humanistic ideals are defended. Under these circumstances, Herder must redefine morality and freedom, i.e., from his anti-intellectualist position, to prove their independence from intellectualism or their compatibility with its rejection.

The constructions that provided the Enlightenment anti-intellectualism with such a double perspective, as we have already seen, are the existential concept of knowledge and the intertwining of freedom and necessity. In both, the monistic approach is expressed in

2853 *Vom Erkennen*, SW VIII, 179.
2854 *loc. cit.* 182.
2855 *loc. cit.* 174, 186.
2856 *loc. cit.* 192; my emphases.
2857 *loc. cit.* 198.

that the division into intellectual and existential categories is abolished. Knowledge and morality are here forms of existential intensity, not of conscious overcoming of an immediately existential given that is considered unreliable. According to the monistic-anti-intellectualist view, from such an overcoming (which, incidentally, can only be forced or fictive) must arise that rule of the general or the thought over the particular or the existentially-living, which manifests itself in the division of man into spirit and body and of the universe into God and world. Herder adopts this line of thought (whose origin in the central Enlightenment approach, as we have reconstructed, must be kept in mind) to conclude his treatise in a most revealing way, namely, by exposing the final logical consequences of his previous statements. With regard to the rooting of reason in the "dark ground" of the soul, the complete unity of knowing and willing is first asserted. They form "only one energy of the soul," so mere speculation is *ipso facto* "division," and "who divides eternally will never possess fully".[2858] Now, since the existential concept of knowledge appears within an optimistic anthropology and ontology, it can easily be assumed that "true knowing and good willing are one": only when everything is good can the true knowing of being, with the *ex definitione* existing unity of knowing and willing, *ipso facto* be an expression of good willing. Just as the theoretical, so too is the practical an elevation of the existential (which is why the traditional distinction between the two must also fall away)—only that in the latter, the optimistic-normative signs of the existential manifest themselves in a more tangible form. And just as the existential is elevated in true knowing and tolerates no theoretical abstraction above its own head ("love is the noblest knowing"), so too does good willing not need to be guided by any concept of morality or freedom: "To talk about freedom is very easy when every stimulus, every apparent good serves as a sufficient cause. It is mostly a miserable deception with these sufficient causes, where the general always seems true, and the particular individual case is a lie. One is a slave to mechanism (this, however, disguised in the light heavenly reason) and believes oneself to be free." If good willing and true knowing are the voice of being itself, and if this being represents the deepest and most exalted necessity (determinism of freedom), then freedom (i.e., existential

2858 *loc. cit.* 199.

intensity or the unfolding of the innate powers in the form of true knowing and good willing) and necessity, just like the general and the particular, must coincide. Freedom is the knowledge of one's necessary rooting in the good being and acting according to this insight: "Here truly is the first seed of freedom, to feel that one is not free, and to know by what chains one is bound? The strongest, freest men feel this most deeply, and strive further; madmen, born for the dungeon, mock them and stay lying in high dreams in the quagmire. Luther, with his *Bum de servo arbitrio*, was and is understood by the fewest".[2859] The logical coherence of the monistic approach, existential concept of knowledge, and the intertwining of freedom and necessity, as presented here by Herder for the first time in the German late Enlightenment, must be clearly noted: for the later-developed philosophy of union, it is fundamental.

The epistemological-anthropological considerations of Herder are ultimately based on the radically optimistic ontology of "everything is good." This dependence of epistemology on the ontological attitude, which we previously identified as a general phenomenon in modern philosophy, is expressed in several formulations by Herder (e.g., "In every smallest part of the infinite reigns the truth, wisdom, and goodness of the whole: in every knowledge, as in every sensation, the image of God is reflected, etc.").[2860] By believing in the presence of God in all corners and facets of being, Herder decisively elevates the "dark ground," without fearing that a rehabilitation of sensibility to such an extent could lead him into the arms of materialism due to the reinterpretation of the concept of reason it requires. For Herder, the open appeal to metaphysics is the effective remedy against skepticism, and accordingly, he sees the cause of the latter in the absence of the ("true") metaphysics as the source of steadfast normative orientation. "The Frenchman knows nothing of the reality of metaphysics," he remarks (it is well-known what "Frenchman" stands for in Herder), and he sharply rejects La Rochefoucauld's "humiliating" view of man in this context.[2861] Since the optimistic ontology not only supports Herder's epistemology and anthropology but also his philosophy of history and, thus, his entire

2859 *loc. cit.* 201f.; Herder's emphasis.
2860 *loc. cit.* 246.
2861 *Journal*, SW IV, 416.

thinking, his active participation in the pantheism debate is entirely understandable: the free Spinozism was, in his eyes, the best way to support this optimistic ontology. He envisioned a combination of the optimistic traits of Shaftesbury and Leibniz with a deepening of the union approach based on Spinozist thought; even during the drafting of the various versions of "Knowing and Feeling," he had planned to title his metaphysical treatise "Spinoza, Shaftesbury, Leibniz".[2862]

With regard to this combination, he now refers to his early critique of Leibniz in the conversation "God." He recalls the definition of substance as that which "has the cause of its existence in itself," concluding from this that there can only be one substance, namely God. Thus, the substantial independence of the monads is finally eliminated, and in this significant point, Spinoza is given precedence over Leibniz: the latter's insistence on the thesis of one substance should be regarded as a philosophical self-evidence rather than

2862 *Gott*, SW XVI, 403. For both the young and the late Herder, Shaftesbury simply and directly embodies the healthy core of Leibniz's philosophy. As it says in the *Letters Concerning the Study of Theology*: "I could almost say that in him one sees all the blossoms of Leibnizian philosophy (without his playful hypotheses) blooming in their freshest youth, indeed that a new Plato speaks through him" (X, 305). On the other hand, Shaftesbury intertwines with Spinoza in Herder's thought (cf. Haym, *Herder*, II, 268 ff.) — and serves, just like Leibniz, for the "dilution" of Spinoza's monism or determinism.
Also interesting for our context is the controversy over Goethe's Spinozism, which, however, can hardly be separated from Herder's. See on this Dilthey, *From the Time of Goethe's Spinoza Studies* (*Collected Writings*, II, 391 ff.), who particularly emphasized Shaftesbury's influence. By contrast, especially Lindner, who wants to reject the "bourgeois" attempt to turn Herder and Goethe into idealistic Neoplatonists; very correct, however, are his observations on the "transformation of Spinozism" through Leibniz's influence (*The Problem of Spinozism*, especially 89 ff.). Bollacher essentially adopts Lindner's basic thesis (*Goethe and Spinoza*, 1 ff., 125 ff.), but rejects his Marxist-Leninist orientation (160 ff.). Nevertheless, Bollacher's analysis falls behind Lindner's insofar as it scarcely takes into account the role of Leibniz (and Shaftesbury) and presents Spinoza's modification in the eighteenth century almost as self-evident.
On the other hand, Lindner does not see this role in the moderation of Spinozism with regard to suspicion of nihilism, but rather in the overcoming of the "static-mechanistic" character of Spinozism, so that finally Goethe and Herder can become nascent dialectical materialists.

blasphemy.[2863] Once again, the "forced hypothesis of pre-established harmony" is rejected,[2864] but this time it is emphasized that it is a Cartesian leftover in Leibniz's thinking, and this has good reasons due to the argumentative strategy being pursued. Herder wants to create the impression that Leibniz's mistake is a consequence of the same dualistic Cartesianism as Spinoza's mistake, which led him into suspicion of materialism or atheism. The dualism, then, and not Spinoza's monist approach, is actually dangerous: thus, Herder argues in relation to those who would understand materialism primarily as a form of monism. In order to defend the union approach in this way, Herder undertakes a forced interpretation of Spinoza, according to which he extended the property of God by staying with the Cartesian "rigid" separation between res cogitans and res extensa, in which the latter is considered dead, i.e., mindless.[2865] Thus, since Spinoza made his God from space, or from solid dead matter, his Cartesian dualism is guilty. Spinoza must therefore be corrected by assuming that his one substance is, in reality, the "primordial force of all forces," which reveals itself as divinity "in infinite forces in infinite ways".[2866] Leibniz was the first to recognize that the force of the "mediating concept between spirit and matter" was.[2867] (Here, Herder refers to newer natural science, which had disproven the Cartesian identification of matter and extension: he therefore welcomes this development, from which the Enlightenment materialism emerged. Noteworthy is Herder's effort to align himself with natural science, knowing "without which metaphysics builds castles in the air.")

Herder must, therefore, find Spinoza's system flawed in the mentioned sense in order to complement it with the concept of force while maintaining the monistic approach to avoid unpleasant consequences. Had he wanted to recognize that the matter in Spinoza's system was, from the beginning, not meant in the Cartesian sense (and precisely because of Spinoza's monism), he would have had to admit that the accusation that consistent monism inevitably leads to "wretched" Spinozism, i.e., to fatalism, etc., is justified, or that

2863 *Gott*, SW XVI, 440ff.
2864 *loc. cit.* 459f.
2865 *loc. cit.* 446ff.
2866 *loc. cit.* 453, 451.
2867 *loc. cit.* 450f.

Spinozism and, therefore, the union approach in its own right are irreparably dangerous.[2868] The decisive role of these underlying thoughts is evident when we see Herder confronting the neuralgic task of endowing the new entity, born from the combination of Spinoza's monism and Leibniz's concept of force, with optimistic-normative signs, namely, presenting the One primal force simultaneously as the "wisest mind" and "infinite goodness." If Spinoza's God is blind, i.e., does not act teleologically, it is because the Cartesian Spinoza, in his inability to overcome the separation of mind and extension, externally connected the two through a third, which he called mind. This abruptly introduced mind must remain as blind as matter in its separation from spirit. But if the union of mind and matter is achieved through force, and therefore force also contains mind and teleology within it, then it is not only the highest but also the wisest power and the infinite goodness.[2869] Therefore, it is not the union, but rather the adherence to the separation that would have made Spinoza's God blind, etc. According to our analysis of the essence and function of the determinism of freedom, it should now be clear that Herder does not intend to replace Spinoza's determinism with divine voluntarism but instead only seeks to give it normative signs. The concept is: the union generates the determinism of freedom, while the separation generates the blind determinism of fate. In the determinism of freedom, Herder sees the common denominator of Leibniz and Spinoza:[2870] Clarke had long since recognized this on the other side.

This structurally and logically loose Spinozism nonetheless allows Herder to assert the desired penetration of the whole by the wisest and kindest primal force, namely, by ontologizing the normative, which he claims to be truly so. According to his own account, he thinks of Leibniz, Shaftesbury, and Plato when he writes: "In the realm of God, nothing evil exists that would be real

2868 Herder's misinterpretation of Spinoza on this crucial point was noted even by contemporaries. Heydenreich wrote: "But if one accuses Spinoza of such a barren concept of matter, one completely misunderstands his principles." "Equally, one misunderstands Spinoza's system if one claims he sharply divided matter and spirit... Spinoza was by no means a dualist" (*Natur und Gott nach Spinoza*, 218, 220).
2869 *Gott*, SW XIV, 479f.
2870 *loc. cit.* 485.

[Shaftesbury's 'real ill']. All evil is nothing." Through the metaphysical thesis, "the opposite itself helps and promotes each other," since everything in the whole existence harmonizes with God's reason, Herder now connects the optimistic ontology of "all is good" with the directly relevant statement in the philosophy of history that the mistakes of men are, to a rational mind, good.[2871] As with Lessing, the idea of the heterogeneity of purposes serves here to justify the determinism of freedom in history; thus, the optimistic ontology is philosophically completed. The implementation of the normative is truly only absolutely necessary when it itself is promoted by what seems to directly oppose it: mistakes, blind sufferings, sensory contingencies, etc. The entire construction is carried by the ontological rooting of the normative, or through the elimination of evil. The ideological-worldview function of metaphysics (Herder knew very well what he was doing when he defended it against "the French") comes here into clear expression. Only by invoking metaphysical instances can something be solemnly affirmed that would otherwise be absurd, namely that one works for the good even when one does evil. In the metaphysical interpretation of this assertion, two levels are silently distinguished, with the immediately visible being subjected to the invisible and decisive one: the evil done is tangible and sometimes even conscious, while the good promoted by it is unconscious and anchored in the plan of the whole. The determinism of freedom coincides with this plan and is to be entirely distinct from that determinism, which is understood as mere causality devoid of any teleology. The presence of the invisible level in the visible (metaphysics in physics) corresponds to the teleological in the merely causal. Herder's sharp rejection of autarkic mechanism and his appeal to force, etc., serves precisely to achieve the determinism of freedom or teleological determinism. Herder is willing to carefully follow any empirically ascertainable causality, but under the condition that it is seen in the light of teleological causality, i.e., that the first of the two mentioned levels is subordinated to the second. Once this is

2871 *loc. cit.* 570f. Litt aptly notes (*Befreiung des geschichtl. Bewußt.*, 137ff.) that in Herder, evil is not mere privation, but "a necessary condition for the realization and effect of the positive." The reason for this lies in the fact that Herder's theodicy is even more radical than Leibniz's, where evil and privation are equated (*Theod.*, §153 = *Phil. Sehr.*, VI, 201).

established, he speaks of the application of "mathematically proven" natural laws to human history or "inner natural laws of an enlightening reason," etc.[2872]

In this perspective, history forms a part of nature animated by the normative — whereby it is a matter of an appropriation and metaphysical elevation of the Enlightenment concept of nature. As Herder writes: "To him for whom the name 'Nature' has, through certain writings of our age [Holbach!], become meaningless and base, let him instead think of that almighty Power, Goodness, and Wisdom, and in his soul name that invisible being which no earthly language is able to name".[2873] The same—no longer traditional[2874]—God or the same teleologically conceived regularity reigns in both nature and history: "The God whom I seek in history must be the same who is in nature: for man is only a small part of the whole, and his history is intimately interwoven like the history of the worm with the fabric it inhabits. Thus, natural laws must also apply in history, which lie in the essence of the matter and of which the divinity can no more disengage itself than it can from those it itself founded, in which it reveals itself in its supreme power with an unchanging, wise, and good beauty".[2875] It is likewise the case in nature that conflict serves the preservation of the whole and that "seeming contradictions lead to one goal";[2876] Voltaire's pessimistic reflections occasioned by the Lisbon earthquake are therefore "unphilosophical outcry".[2877] Since Herder programmatically unites the idea of the whole with the idea of development ("thus not only a coherence but also an ascending series

2872 *Ideen*, SW XIV, 225ff., 217.

2873 *op. cit.* XIII, 10.

2874 That a fundamental transformation of the concept of God was necessary "so that room might be created for the independent content of history," i.e., so that the overcoming of the traditional salvation-historical conception could be made possible without resorting to atheism, has been emphasized by Litt (*Befreiung des geschichtl. Bewußt.*, 82), though he seeks the precursor of Herder's *Gott* exclusively in Hamann. Antoni remarks that the shift from the general-universal to the concrete-national within historicism also undermined the old transcendence (*Lotta*, 166).

2875 *Ideen*, SW XIV, 244; cf. XIII, 14f.

2876 *op. cit.* XIII, 60f., 70; XIV, 213f.

2877 *op. cit.* XIII, 24.

of forces reigns in the invisible realm of creation")[2878], he conceives history not merely as a side aspect, but also as a higher stage of the divine totality of nature. The bearer and precondition of history, man, appears after a development within nature, in which the inorganic and organic stages "at last all unite in the form of man, insofar as it could encompass them".[2879] Whole and development thus unite throughout nature in general, and since the part is at the same time a type of the whole, they also do the same at every stage of development, each of which forms a microcosm in itself. Thus, for example, the organisms of animals emerge from "one prototype" and develop teleologically toward that "one type" toward which "nature aimed everywhere".[2880] Thus, history too, on the basis of this construction, can be regarded not merely as a part or stage of the divine nature, but also as an independent (albeit equally divine) whole, whose idea is to be united with the idea of development in a manner proper to this level. As nature begins with the primal force, so history begins with man; or: in nature, the primal force represents the whole to be developed, in history, this dynamic, unfoldable whole is man. Given the already early formation of the fundamental structures in Herder's thought, it is not surprising that even a preliminary stage of the work *Auch eine Philosophie...* is introduced with the words: "The further we progress in the investigation of the earliest history, the more the human race in all its branches simplifies itself to the origin from one".[2881] Also in the *Ideas* the explanation of the anthropological basic concepts precedes the part properly concerned with the philosophy of history,[2882] although here they follow the depiction of the development of nature rooted in and carried out by the primal force. As the whole to be unfolded, human nature is a constant, for the firmness of the whole determines the firmness of the teleologically conceived development; the teleological guarantees in every single phase of development that the attained relative form will not lose itself in its own relativity, but that it will serve the absolute meaning of the whole. In terms of

2878 *loc. cit.* 169.
2879 *loc. cit.* 167.
2880 *loc. cit.* 66, 126.
2881 SW XXXII, 235; Herder's emphasis.
2882 In the IVth book; these reflections are resumed and expanded in the XVth book.

content, anthropology naturally overlaps with the normative goal aimed at by history. Man is "formed" for "activity of reason," for "finer senses," for art, language, for "finer drives and thus for freedom"" for humanity and religion.[2883] The spiritualization of matter through force at the ontological level corresponds, at the historical level, to the saturation of human nature with the normative, initially in the form of a predisposition, whose unfolding and perfection, however, is certain — indeed unavoidable.

In the attempt to connect the whole and development in history, Herder faces the task of having to refer to forms of development as stages that are relative to each other and, prima facie, have no points of contact. Eskimos and Romans, Chinese and Arabs root in completely different environments and represent correspondingly divergent cultures. In order to conceive and present the heterogeneous as successive and thus coherent or related, Herder must find a common denominator. This is the metaphysically defined whole, whose parts or stages are the culturally heterogeneous entities that appear heterogeneous from an empirical perspective and are empirically researchable (thus, the mechanism of the two levels, the visible and the invisible, functions here as well). The whole exists in the part as its normative meaning and simultaneously as that secretly acting teleology that drives and guides development after it has set it in motion.[2884] Only the metaphysical conviction of the omnipresence of the normative or teleological, i.e., the fulfillment of development in the character of the whole, enables Herder to give justice to the individuality of each culture without losing himself in relativism and skepticism.[2885] In other words, his metaphysical system gives him the necessary backing to emphasize the rooting of cultures in their respective geographical and socio-historical sensibilities, without

2883 *Ideen*, SW XIV, 207ff.

2884 Under these circumstances, Herder cannot be satisfied with a strictly causal concept of development. He also knows a teleological one, which refers to the external teleology, the guiding activity of a personal God, but above all he imagines an organismic model in which teleology becomes internalized and fuses with mechanical causality. See Stadelmann, *Histor. Sinn bei Herder*, 68ff. Cf. Barnard's good remarks on "teleological causation" in Herder (*Herder's Soc. and Polit. Thought*, 51ff., 114ff.).

2885 Perhaps Herder formulated his views most beautifully in the 116th *Brief zur Beförderung der Humanität*, SW XVIII, 246ff.

losing himself in relativism and skepticism, just as, on the basis of the same metaphysics, he could effortlessly acknowledge the rooting of reason in the psychic sensibility or the affinity of humans with higher animals. Through the bold rehabilitation of sensibility in the realm of the historical-cultural, Herder seeks to neutralize or preempt the related skeptical arguments;[2886] he takes seriously the thought that it is only through the submission of this factor to a metaphysically given meaning of the whole that skepticism can ultimately be countered. As mentioned: the normative is only objectively irrefutable if even the contradictory serves it in reality. The natural-sensuous in history, therefore, is not the opposite, but the vehicle of the intellectual-normative: "When has the deity in the whole analogy of nature acted differently than through nature? And is it not precisely divinity, which works so universally, uniformly, and invisibly through all its works? – In a human context, let all human sufferings play! In every age, let them play according to the age! In every part of the world, in every nation![2887]". In relation to a long-term and more effective fight against skepticism, Herder wants to distance himself from the view that the straightforward realization of reason could be assumed independently of cultural milieu, etc. Those who "have written novels about the general improvement of the world" and, for this purpose, "exaggerate or distort facts: diminish or silence counterfacts," are thus rejected in a tone similar to that of those who "treat vices and virtues like climates... human customs and inclinations like the leaves of the trees... see doubt in a hundred forms.[2888]"

One must, therefore, in no case assume that Herder would hesitate in his choice if he had to decide between skepticism, historicism, and timeless morality. Later, his polemic against abstract moralism at least did not subside, and he repeatedly and purposefully used formulations aimed at balancing historical relativism by pointing to the lasting content of morality or the humanistic ideal (one such formulation is: "What pure reason and cheap morality are, Socrates

2886 Already Meinecke pointed out that Herder could only overcome the relativistic view of history, inherent in the rehabilitation of individuality, through a metaphysics (*Entstehung des Historismus*, 397, 407).
2887 *Auch eine Philosophie*, SW V, 521.
2888 *loc. cit.* 511f. Cf. Herder's review of Millar's work on the estates, SW V, 452ff.

and Confucius, Zoroaster, Plato, and Cicero agree upon: despite their thousandfold differences, they all acted on one point, on which our entire race rests").[2889] Even though Herder, despite the inviolability of the normative, calmly surrenders to his sensitive historical inclination, he does so because, based on his metaphysics, he feels theoretically strong enough to underpin the normative even more thoroughly in this way. The historical approach, in turn, ultimately arises from the rehabilitation of sensibility, which provides the framework to grasp historical or cultural entities in their emergence and development within a very concrete environment—and this means: in their individuality. It is thus closely related to the Enlightenment tendency from which skepticism or nihilism emerged. If Herder is unable to recognize this origin of his own historicism, it is again his anti-intellectualism responsible—for this time in the form of the philosophy of feeling, from which standpoint skepticism cannot be a consequence of the "true" reason identical with the heart, but rather only of the "cold" intellect. The philosopher of feeling Herder can, therefore, lump "abstract" moralism and skepticism into the same pot of intellectualism, being subject to the same optical illusion as Rousseau.[2890] However, it is not this illusion that counts in intellectual history, but his grand attempt to, while rejecting both the abstract general and the inherently relative particular, arrive at a metaphysically grounded union of concretely unfolded generality and

2889 *Ideen*, SW XIV, 230.
The permanent conflict between historical relativism and normative judgments in Herder is described by Stadelmann, *Histor. Sinn bei Herder*, 22ff., cf. 117ff., who aptly sums up the situation: "one has difficulty deciding whether Herder was more of an optimistic believer in progress against better knowledge, or a reluctant relativist" (65).
Wiese also notes the enduring tension between "enlightened universalism" and "organic-historical view of peoples" in Herder (*Herder*, 88f.).
2890 The Rousseauian tones in Herder's early rejection of our "philosophical, cold European world" (*Auch eine Philos.* SW V, 484) are unmistakable.
Originally, Herder also adopted Rousseau's philosophical schema, with the nostalgic glorification of the state of nature promoting his turn toward history. See Wolff's study, *Der junge Herder und Rousseaus Entwicklungsidee*, esp. 760ff., 794ff., 810ff.
Although Wolff identifies Rousseau's early influence, he rightly observes that "historicism and anti-Rousseauism are practically identical in Herder" (769).

the particular understood as a type of the whole, which is most richly reflected in the intertwining of the whole and development, or of the normative and teleologically conceived causal.

d) Kant, the Post-Kantians, and the Legacy of the Enlightenment

Here, neither a genetic representation of Kant's work nor a philosophical analysis of it in the narrower sense will be attempted. The aim is rather to locate the mature "critical" view of Kant from the perspective of the question of this paper. This, however, is no simple task, especially given some persisting prejudices. A philosophy of history moving self-satisfiedly outside the general history of ideas long considered Kant to be the destroyer of metaphysics and the initiator of the "Copernican Revolution," contrasting him with the "great systems of rationalism" and understanding him through his differentiation from them. Since one was working from a highly abstract conception of the Enlightenment or ignoring its anti-intellectual character, it was either not realized or not wanted to be realized that the "rationalist systems" had long been dead and that the Copernican Revolution had already been completed (as the new definition of metaphysics proves)[2891] by the time Kant appeared on the scene. In reality, Kant was forced by the specific German situation, philosophically marked by the struggle between Wolffianism and anti-Wolffianism, to rediscover some insights that had already been commonplace for Western European Enlightenment. The more thorough engagement with "dogmatism" became necessary only because of its longevity in Germany, where scholastic ontology had survived into Wolffianism, while elsewhere the rejection of dogmatism was so self-evident that there was no longer any need to argue it in detail. This can easily be demonstrated: Kant's main argument against "dogmatism," namely the doctrine of the limits of reason or the unknowability of the thing-in-itself, had already been an Enlightenment commonplace since Locke (and Newton) and was pietistically tinted in Germany.[2892]

This statement is not intended to diminish Kant as a thinker, but

2891 See above, Chapter V, Section 3a.

2892 Tonelli, *Bornes de l'entendement humain*, especially 410 ff. Kant's investigation of the problem of causality also has a long prehistory in the Enlightenment; see Tonelli, *Anfänge von Kants Kritik*, passim.

to clear the way for the understanding of the specific aspects of his work within the broader spectrum of the Enlightenment. They arise from the fact that while Kant adopts the skeptical position regarding the omniscience claims of metaphysics, he is by no means willing to follow the skeptical path, especially in ethics. However, moral philosophical relativism—both utilitarianism and nihilism—was inseparably linked to the empirical theory of knowledge, which itself had dealt the decisive blows to the omniscience claims of metaphysics. Kant, in light of this constellation, found himself in the paradoxical position of having to adopt the results of empiricism while simultaneously needing to refute empiricism itself. Since epistemological skepticism could not lead to moral philosophical skepticism or agnosticism regarding good and evil, it had to be exclusively confined to the thesis of the limits of theoretical knowledge, while simultaneously distancing itself carefully from empiricism, which had previously supported that thesis. Since Kant's problem was to escape skepticism while still acknowledging the destruction of metaphysics by modern and Enlightenment skepticism, he ventured to create a synthesis of intellectualist and skeptical positions that was radically new. Had his only goal been the destruction of metaphysics, the epistemological empiricism of Locke or Hume would have been sufficient for him. However, Kant took on the intellectual burden of combining the consequences of skepticism and the starting points of intellectualism because he had normative goals in mind. The thesis of the limits of knowledge would have been more naturally or understandably grounded in empiricist assumptions, but justifying a non-utilitarian moral philosophy was much more difficult. Precisely because he could not reconcile the presence of a mighty autonomous intellect with the thesis of the limits of knowledge, Kant at least offered the possibility of firm and secure knowledge within those limits as a substitute or operational domain for this very intellect. Thus, Kant's path diverges from that of skepticism and, in terms of the materials and building blocks of his philosophy, also from that of Western European Enlightenment. Intellectualist tendencies certainly existed in it (Reid's and Beattie's attempts even somewhat prefigure Kant's synthesis of skepticism and intellectualism), but Kant drew most of the relevant ideas from German moral philosophy, which, as

we have already noted,[2893] even in its anti-Wolffian version, still shared certain assumptions with Wolffianism, at least negatively.[2894]

Logically supported, Kant's dual philosophical endeavor is driven by a programmatic rejection of monism, that is, by a well-thought-out multidimensional system of thought that is characterized by clear, principled separations. All of these separations themselves are based on the fundamental distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, or, when applied to moral philosophy, between ought and being. On this fundamental issue, Kant stands as the most radical opponent of the Enlightenment in the vast majority of its manifestations. This is because its main concern was precisely to reconcile reason and sensibility, or ought and being, through the normative concept of nature.[2895] From the perspective of the naive, traditional understanding of the "rationalist" Enlightenment, it is difficult to imagine that Kant was in irreconcilable opposition to the (mainstream) Enlightenment. However, Kant himself was very well aware that his basic distinctions ran counter to "the common opinion" of the age. He argues against it, stating, "since the continuous connection of all phenomena within a context of nature is an unrelenting law, this would necessarily overthrow all freedom if one were to cling tenaciously to the reality of appearances." Therefore, those who follow the common opinion could never have succeeded in reconciling nature and freedom.[2896] A continuation and application of this thought is Kant's thesis that the foundation for the unity of the moral law has nothing to do with "the nature of humans or the circumstances in the world they are placed in".[2897] The strong anthropological and sociological orientation of Enlightenment moral philosophy is well-known[2898] enough for us to understand the full extent of the contrast with Kant's position. Now, the normative nature and human conception of the Enlightenment underwent a

2893 See above, Section 2a in this chapter.

2894 Kant's departure from skepticism due to his conviction in the possibility of secure knowledge, as well as his relationship to the German scholastic tradition, are emphasized by Tonelli, *Kant und die antiken Skeptiker*, 110 f.

2895 See above, Chapter V, Section 4.

2896 *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 565 = *Akademie-Ausgabe* III, 365 f.

2897 *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, *Akademie-Ausgabe* IV, 389.

2898 See above, Chapter VI, Section 3.

metaphysical elevation or foundation in the late German Enlightenment, which also came with a strengthening of anti-intellectualist tendencies. Therefore, Kant had to supplement his critique of the mainstream Western Enlightenment with a rejection of the mainstream of the late German Enlightenment. In his writings "On the Failure of All Previous Attempts in Theodicy"[2899] and his remarks on Herder's "Ideas",[2900] the rejection of the aforementioned metaphysical enhancement of Enlightenment normativism is clearly expressed. These texts testify to his objective philosophical isolation within the late German Enlightenment, which was evident in various forms: in Herder's and Hamann's polemics, in Goethe's distance, and not least in the reinterpretations of Schiller and the early Kantian thinkers. Reinterpretations were inevitable due to Kant's enormous influence, and this contrasts strangely with his intellectual isolation and requires a special explanation. However, one must not overlook that the unusual intellectual quality that appeared so solemnly in Kant's writings, in a time of intense ferment and communication (scholarly journals and newspapers), had to attract widespread attention. However, additional conditions were necessary for this. In Germany, for example, there was no work that could fulfill the same function in intellectual life as Locke's "Essay" in England (and partially in France); such works, however, are significant during times of ferment because they form crystallization points and reference points around which intellectual life revolves, making it clearer and, in general, more fruitful. From the inherent contradictions in the effect of a classical work, it can be explained why Kant's work, immediately after its publication, primarily served to allow the anti-Kantian or monistic tendencies, which were by far the stronger in Germany at the end of the 18th century, to be philosophically articulated with the appropriate terminology that Kant had developed. There were certainly Kantian thinkers in the stricter sense, but they had little influence on later developments, and among them, the most militant, original, or arbitrary thinkers were not to be found. Interestingly, they mainly came from either the school of Crusius, and therefore understood Kant primarily in the light of the older, less pressing disputes with Wolff, etc., or from orthodox Christian circles who not

2899 *Akademie-Ausgabe* VIII, especially 263 f.
2900 *Akademie-Ausgabe* VIII, especially 54 f.

only appreciated the impotence of theoretical reason but also valued the radically evil.

The irreconcilable separation between Being and Ought, or the causal and the normative, often formed the logical vestibule to a strictly scientific stance, or to absolute skepticism or nihilism. For Kant, however, this was the surest means of grounding morality. The greatest opponent of the Enlightenment regarding the mixing of nature and freedom was simultaneously the most passionate Enlightener when it came to moral pathos. However, he paid such close attention to the results of the empiricist refutation of metaphysics that he could not simply ontologize this pathos. The often cautiously concealed, but systematically conditioned, aversion of the empiricists to arrive at a morality that was not merely "artificial" convinced Kant of the moral danger of their teachings. On the other hand, such foundational texts as the refutation of the ontological argument for God show how well Kant knew the sophistical mechanisms of the kind of thinking that underlay the Enlighteners' constant attempts to combine empiricism-sensualism with a moral stance. This double-polemic consideration had to culminate in the insight that for a logically consistent foundation of morality, there could be no other way than the sharp separation of Being and Ought. Moreover, there were positive reasons for Kant to make this separation, arising from his own worldview. As a follower and representative of the mechanistic natural sciences, he believes in natural causality (which he must, incidentally, defend against Hume's epistemological skepticism to assign the possibility of secure knowledge). Additionally, he holds a distinctly pessimistic view of human nature. Therefore, external nature is senseless because it is strictly causal, while human nature is unreliable in its moralism. Kant could have fallen into the temptation of grounding his moral philosophy in a manner similar to Shaftesbury or Rousseau if he had wanted to start from an optimistic anthropology. But because he did not, he too had to share the (already articulated before him) mistrust of intellectualists regarding the moral philosophical suitability of the feeling philosophy.[2901] Both the senselessness of external nature and the danger of human weakness thus lead to the sharp separation of the intelligible from the sensible, or Ought from Being, as a normative imperative. Kant's agreement with skepticism extended not only to the

2901 See above, Chapter V, Section 3b.

thesis of the limits of knowledge but also to the directly relevant anthropological aspects of moral philosophy. Coincidentally, it is therefore in both areas that this is compensated by the reference to the a priori nature of the intelligible – whether as knowledge or as moral law.

Despite the difficulties and inconsistencies, the separation of the intelligible from the sensible, or of Ought from Being, that Kant had to navigate in the execution of his epistemological and moral philosophical approach, is not the primary focus here.[2902] More important is a brief note indicating that Kant himself, in his moral concerns, took certain steps to indirectly bridge that separation, which could easily be interpreted in terms of skepticism or even nihilism, especially with regard to securing the normative. The persistence with which Kant, despite all the careful differentiation of regulative and constitutive principles, emphasizes the legitimacy of the former is striking. Given the insurmountable limits of theoretical reason, it is not immediately clear where this legitimacy is grounded, or where the line is to be drawn between "the need of reason" and enthusiasm, and based on which substantive criteria this line can even be drawn. The call to implement regulative principles was entirely understandable, as long as they were mistakenly conflated with the constitutive. However, alongside Kant's statement of their mere intelligibility, this almost sounds peculiar. The intent, however, remains unmistakable: to provide thought with a guiding star so that it does not get lost in the labyrinth of skepticism under any circumstances. This, however, must not happen with the normative question, which is why Kant also asserts the primacy of practical reason over theoretical reason. Since Kant also says that reason is only one, differing only in its application,[2903] the primacy of practical reason essentially implies a prohibition on theoretical reason from coming to conclusions that might hinder the normative needs of practical reason. As a result of the separation between Being and Ought, Kant had to locate both freedom and morality exclusively within reason, and beyond that, he needed to structure reason in such a way that it could only be understood

2902 On this, see the analyses by Topitsch, *Voraussetzungen der Transzendentalphilosophie*, especially 56 ff., 73 ff., 83 ff., 94 ff., and passim.
2903 *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface = *Akademie-Ausgabe* IV, 391.

through the idea of freedom. The unification of reason under the banner of the practical or the normative makes the separation from Being, if not undone, at least irrelevant, since it opens the way for a redefinition of Being itself. This is where Fichte will build upon Kant's work.

Kant's concern with safeguarding the normative is ultimately responsible for the logical discrepancy between his moral and historical philosophy. His morality is individualistic (this has nothing to do with the universality of the moral law, but means that the individual acts from their own insight and responsibility) and demands the clear and conscious supremacy of reason over sensibility. In contrast, his philosophy of history places the species at the center, and reason in history is by no means separated from historical sensibility, but rather, it breaks through through it; the goal of history, like that of morality, is the realization of the postulates of reason. However, in contrast to morality, in history the forces and means themselves that are supposed to lead to the reasonable goal are not necessarily reasonable—indeed, in essence, they are necessarily unreasonable. Therefore, it is difficult to understand what historical significance moral action according to the categorical imperative could have, if reason in history does not require such action to achieve its goals (if, on the other hand, this action has no necessary historical significance, it must be explained what sense history itself could have, i.e., why it should have a connection with morality at all). Above all, when it is explicitly stated that "it is those natural dispositions that are aimed at the scope of man's reason [the individual] that should only fully develop in the species, not in the individual".[2904] So is the action of the individual necessarily incomplete as long as the species has not reached full development? Does absolute autonomy in moral action here and now not essentially become self-deception? The trick of history lies in the fact that it makes use of the sufferings, the inclinations, the sensual nature of man (and even his strong antisocial tendencies),[2905] in order to lead humanity into the realm of freedom, without humanity being consciously aware of the movement towards it. Thus, on the level of history and the species, reason does not lie outside of sensibility, but within it; it is precisely its secret forward-

2904 *Idea for a Universal History*, *Akademie-Ausgabe* VIII, 18.
2905 loc. cit., 21.

driving and guiding force.

Under these circumstances, it should be understandable why Kant in his philosophy of history used the concept of nature as required by the "common opinion" of the time; nature has a "plan" and an "end goal," "nature knows better (than man) what is good for his species," etc. The realization of the reasonable goal lies within nature itself, which must therefore be understood as the unity of being and ought, if it is to achieve what is expected of it. Kant moves in this respect within the framework of the well-known Enlightenment approach to philosophy of history, which stands in the tradition of teleology. History is supposed to have a telos in both senses of the word (as an end and a goal), and all historical endeavors are to serve the realization of this telos; thus, the bridge between reason and sensibility in history is made, and the skepticism that arises from the rehabilitation of sensibility is eliminated. However, all this can only be asserted by invoking a predetermined goal, which is why the philosophy of history must take on an eschatological character. Accordingly, Kant speaks of "Chiliasm," which philosophy can also have—but of a kind "that is nothing less than fanaticism.[2906]" (He has not yet referred to any form of Chiliasm as fanaticism.) For Herder—whose philosophy of history Kant criticizes without realizing his own proximity to it—these and similar theses were entirely in line with the "common opinion" regarding the relationship between nature and freedom, which he also openly advocated. However, Kant has inconsistently fallen into a line of thought whose sophistic mechanisms he himself had previously revealed. The Enlightener in him came to the fore in his philosophy of history in both ways, that is, both in his belief in a reasonable goal and in the intertwining of reason and sensibility, or ought and being, in the concept of nature. His epistemological assumptions prevented him from taking such a step, for the "need of reason" prevailed in him, and at least as a philosopher of history, he indulged in the sweet forbidden fruit—namely, the elevation of the regulative to the constitutive.

It is therefore not surprising that the young Fichte (in his "System of Transcendental Idealism") and later Hegel could adopt the fundamental ideas of Kant's philosophy of history alongside the philosophical heritage of Lessing and Herder, even though (and—due

2906 loc. cit., 27.

to the discrepancies in Kant's thinking—because) they reject Kantian morality: for the approach of the post-Kantians aims precisely at the merging of being and ought, or freedom and necessity—thus at the removal of Kant's separation between the regulative and constitutive.[2907]

They are inspired by a partly ecstatic, partly Promethean sense of life and cannot bring themselves to understand the pessimistic aspects in Kant's thought. Thus, the motivation and function of these separations do not immediately make sense to them—they find it incomprehensible that Kant, despite the primacy of the normative, refuses to give it a final, unshakable ontological and anthropological foundation. Therefore, they interpret Kant's separations as separations within his philosophy, which could easily be overcome through the 'perfection' of the system. Kant does not present an ontology, but only a metaphysics of the practical, or for the sake of the practical, the ontological approach, however, is at the forefront for the post-Kantians (also for Fichte, insofar as the "I" creates the world). This fundamental difference between Kant and the post-Kantians remains, even if it could be shown that the post-Kantians ultimately ontologized Kantian postulates, motivated in a manner similar to Kant. However, the endeavors of the post-Kantians could not be traced back to Kant's influence on this point, if the thesis is correct that all traditional ontology is, after all, an ontologization of practical-moral postulates. The importance of the factor "worldview" in the perspective of ontologizing the practical is self-evident, and it is inconsistent to recognize the primacy of the practical postulates in the formation of an ontology, without also being willing to admit that the resulting philosophy is primarily a rationalization of such a worldview. Kant was most likely aware of this mechanism, and that is precisely why he wanted to avoid the establishment of an ontology: because of his view on the meaninglessness of the external world and the evil of human nature, he could not derive moral-practical postulates, which were supposed to be realized not because of, but despite, the nature of the world, from an ontological principle that must necessarily be the foundation of a completely different world than the one he envisioned

2907 The evidence for these statements about the relationship of the post-Kantians to Kant can be found in: Kondylis, *Die Entstehung der Dialektik*, passim.

in order to generate such postulates and secure their realization a priori. However, Kant could not avoid placing exactly what he was resisting at the center of his thinking, for the more he rejected the establishment of an ontology, the more he had to emphasize the primacy of the practical to support his theory of freedom. That is, the more he had to let the factor "worldview" (first his own worldview, as a philosopher, choosing the primacy of the practical, and then the worldview of every individual, who should be autonomous and free in his decision) take precedence, so that the post-Kantians could even accuse him of subjectivism. They made it easier for themselves: by directly ontologizing the practical postulates, they could easily present their philosophical constructs as strictly objective entities and thereby (since the practical postulates seemed secure from the outset) significantly mitigate the assertive primacy of the practical in favor of the theoretical. However, this theoretical was merely a disguise for the very practical, which Kant, due to his ideological stance, was forced to present in its bare form. Now, the rationalization of the worldview had become such a natural and self-evident or unconscious process that one no longer had to speak of the primacy of the worldview. Although "power" and "claims to power" were often discussed, they supposedly originated from absolute reason or the absolute idea, and not from the needs of the practical or the philosopher's worldview.

The blurring of the Kantian boundary between the regulative and the constitutive took on forms among the post-Kantians that were partly divergent and partly complementary. Fichte radicalizes the primacy of practical or normative reason to such an extent that the task of creating a world is entirely assigned to it. The thing-in-itself is as it should be, Fichte says. Although he hardly incorporates the external nature into his considerations, thus seemingly staying true to Kant's transcendental idealism, he undertakes restructurings within the realm of reason that ultimately bring about the downfall of the dual-world theory. When he says "its being is knowledge," he means exactly this fusion, this absorption of the world into reason, which corresponds to the shaping of the world according to the (practical) postulates of reason. Since reason no longer constitutes one part of the dual-world theory but instead coincides with being itself, subject and object, regulative and constitutive, prove to be ontologically related. Transcendental philosophy thus becomes ontology—without

abandoning the claim to be the "true" transcendental philosophy. Fichte does not grasp the significance of Kant's theory of freedom—which connects him with the other post-Kantians—and therefore, like the others, he ignores Kant's significant words: "If appearances are things in themselves, freedom cannot be saved.[2908]" By assigning practical reason the task of creating the world ex nihilo, or by viewing the world as the free setting of the free "I," he must not only remove the realm of necessity but at least perforate it through the activity of the "I." In parallel, Kant's distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself loses its significance. The unification of reason in the sign of the practical thus leads to a fusion of world and reason—again in the sign of the practical, which Fichte identifies with the normative without further logical mediation (i.e., through decision). When Fichte utters the phrase "all being is knowledge," which is seminal for the late Hegel, he means exactly this fusion, this absorption of the world into reason, which corresponds to the shaping of the world according to the (practical) postulates of reason. Since reason no longer constitutes one part of the dual-world theory but coincides with being itself, subject and object, regulative and constitutive, prove to be ontologically related. Transcendental philosophy becomes ontology—without relinquishing the claim to be "true" transcendental philosophy.

Even the development of the monistic tendency of the German Late Enlightenment, represented above all through Hölderlin (who, at the latest since 1799, aligned himself with Schelling), arrives at the same formal structure, within which, as said, a metaphysical intensification of the Enlightenment's normative concept of nature was carried out, from which a radical theodicy ("all is good") emerged. Here too, the original ontologically grounded unity of subject and object, of the regulative and the constitutive, is asserted, whereby the Kantian separations — and the concept of freedom associated with them — must be set aside. We know that this tendency was anti-intellectualist in orientation. In its further development and philosophical elaboration by Hölderlin and Schelling, its anti-intellectualism asserts itself in the form of the thesis that Being or the thing-in-itself cannot be grasped through thinking; thinking is a product of finitude, indeed finitude itself, a product of the fall from pre-original Being. The continued agreement with Kant regarding the

2908 *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 564 = *Akademie-Ausgabe* III, 365.

limits of reason—despite otherwise massive differences—and the entire anti-intellectualist posture of the German Late Enlightenment now express themselves in Hölderlin's and Schelling's struggle against Fichte's transformation of ontology into transcendental philosophy, of Being into Knowledge—or conversely, if one prefers. In his rejection of the mature Hegelian philosophy, the later Schelling does exactly the same: he fights the later Hegel with the same arguments he had once deployed against Fichte in his youth. For Hegel, who at least up to 1802 followed Hölderlin and Schelling, later returned to Fichte's implication-laden formula "Being is Knowledge" and adopted a position that was meant to render the conflict between transcendental philosophy and ontology obsolete. The all-encompassing character of reason now no longer derives (only) from the absolute expansion of radicalized practical reason, but from the inclusion of the entire wealth of dialectically grasped determinations of the *ov* into its domain. Thus, while the Fichtean "subjectivism" is supposed to be overcome, it is simultaneously preserved in a very essential sense, namely by defining substance as subject. The decision that the Absolute is knowable, which after 1802 for Hegel becomes the *conditio sine qua non* for abolishing the thing-in-itself and thus all Kantian separations, made this definition unavoidable. Substance can only be fully knowable if it is homologous and homogeneous with the subject, that is, if it displays the structures of the subject. Absolute subjectivization of substance therefore means absolute knowledge of it. Through the decision in favor of the knowability of the Absolute, Hegel believes himself to be appropriating the modern principle of thought and freedom — which is why he pairs his philosophical reorientation with the socio-theoretical legitimation of the new bourgeois society. However, he does this less out of a "progressive" spirit in the now common liberal or democratic sense than because of the radicality of his theodicy (this world is not God-abandoned, as it says precisely in the preface to his main work on social philosophy) and the derived theory of reconciliation with the existing world. Nevertheless, even here the influence of Fichte's Promethean attitude (which, in terms of its effect, can hardly be distinguished from traditional mystical teachings) becomes visible, namely in the doctrine of the humanization of God. Through this, the postulates of practical reason are once again woven into the ground of the world—which, after all, is ultimately

(substantial, not accidental) subject—so that its unfolding can be understood as a progressive materialization and concretization of these postulates. Again, however, Hegel seeks to keep hubris in check, by bringing together God and man under the condition that the concept of man absorbs all ontological determinations of substance into itself, so that man cannot, by definition, be set against God or substance. Also opposed to hubris—and to the "shallow Enlightenment of the understanding"—is the retention of some anti-intellectualist motifs in Hegel's late philosophy. The Absolute can indeed be known, but only through a higher, intensified form of thinking, which looks down quite contemptuously upon "mere understanding." Despite this lasting memory of the time when, together with Hölderlin and Schelling, he fought against the understanding precisely because it assumed the unknowability of the Absolute, Hegel was classified and condemned as an abstract intellectualist—by a generation that was ready to applaud in his doctrines the deification of man and of the totality, that is, the elimination of old transcendence, but that wished, for obvious polemical reasons, to carry this out under materialist signs.

That Schelling's critique of Hegel could influence the generation coming of age intellectually around 1840—despite all their skepticism toward the theosophical flights of fancy of the old man—forms a fine example of the direct, even if late, effect of anti-intellectualistic traditions originally rooted in the Enlightenment, quite independently of whether and to what extent they later combined with analogous currents of religious origin. In order to judge the impact of the Enlightenment as a whole correctly, it is absolutely necessary to carefully distinguish the Enlightenment itself—both in its diversity and in its main thrust, namely the rehabilitation of sensuality—from the various one-dimensional conceptions of the Enlightenment that arose in later times and were conceived with polemical intent. The fact, for example, that someone turns against the humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment cannot eo ipso mean that he has nothing to do with the Enlightenment in an intellectual-historical sense (Nietzsche's case speaks eloquently to this: he wages battle against the normative idealism of the Enlightenment, yet his *Genealogy of Morals* and his interpretations of human relationships and emotions with regard to the mechanisms of self-love can be almost entirely reconstructed based on Enlightenment materials). Nor may the fact that someone confuses

rationalism and intellectualism, and, by combating the "shallow understanding" (as cognitive faculty), also believes himself to be combating the "rationalistic Enlightenment" (as the sum of certain substantive positions), be interpreted to mean that the one who so thoroughly misunderstands the intellectual-historical constellation can have derived nothing from the Enlightenment. The legend of an intellectualistic Enlightenment on the one hand, and the normative conception of Enlightenment that reduces its essence to certain moral-emancipatory positions on the other, form in fact the two greatest obstacles to attempting to trace the intellectual-historical effects of the Enlightenment. If, on the other hand, we place the rehabilitation of sensuality—or today, the tendency toward the dissolution first of intellect and then of spirit altogether, now reaching its conclusion[2909] —at the center of our consideration, then many important developments of the 19th and 20th centuries will appear in a new light. To name one example: the priority of willing and practice over thinking and theory, as it was founded in various ways by Schopenhauer, Stirner, Marx, and Nietzsche, constitutes only the anthropological deepening and concretization of guiding Enlightenment motifs. Even the now central concept of ideology could only develop on the basis of the insight into both the material conditioning and the practical-purpose-rational orientation of the spirit marked by willing or striving for power. This same insight was accompanied by the discovery of the cultural whole in which the individual is rooted, and thus paved the way for modern social and historical science, while at the same time giving powerful impetus to biology and depth psychology in our century—seeking in them, in turn, its own confirmation.

What consequences all this has had for a non-utilitarian or non-self-cancelling grounding of norms is by now sufficiently well known. At least in this sense, the Enlightenment — especially in the liberal West — is today more alive than ever. Yet it no longer appears in the form of the originally intended synthesis, but rather in its full inner division, namely as the incurable falling apart of the causal and the normative. The Enlightenment of the 18th century could usually forget or repress this division originally inherent in it, because it was able to deploy both the causal and its normative elements against the

2909 See Chapter I, note 10.

theological opponent. Today, the old opponent is missing, and all that remains is the increasingly unpleasant awareness of the division. Some alleviate it by continuing to pursue conventional philosophical games, or even inventing new ones, such as those of linguistic analysis. Others dream longingly of a supposed pre-Enlightenment or pre-industrial idyll, and in passing discover — incidentally quite in the spirit of Enlightenment primitivism and exoticism — the deep wisdom of non-European customs. And the modest do not tire of insisting that they cannot recognize truth, from which — making a virtue of necessity — they derive the demand for tolerance and openness of society, as if such a demand could be binding even for those who do not regard themselves as ignorant. Contrary to these and similar positions and wishes, however, it is to be suspected that, as so often in history, those who will ultimately bring the crisis to an end — in their own way — will not be the nostalgic, nor the tolerant, nor particularly fine thinkers.

Abkürzungen

AA	=	Akademie-Ausgabe, s. Kant
AfBG	=	Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte
AfGPh	=	Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie
AfK	=	Archiv für Kulturgeschichte
AfPh	=	Archiv für Philosophie
AJJR	=	Annales Jean-Jacques Rousseau
AHES	=	Archive for History of Exact Sciences
AHR	=	American Historical Review
AHRV	=	Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française
AS	=	Annals of Science
AT	=	Adam-Tannery, s. Descartes
CHM	=	Cahiers d'histoire mondiale
DHS	=	Dix-Huitième Siècle
DVj	=	Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte
EG	=	Études Germaniques
EW	=	English Works, s. Hobbes
GCFI	=	Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana
GRM	=	Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift
GW	=	Gesammelte Werke
HZ	=	Historische Zeitschrift
JHI	=	Journal of the History of Ideas
JHPh	=	Journal of the History of Philosophy
JPh	=	Journal of Philosophy
KS	=	Kant-Studien
MEW	=	Marx-Engels, Werke
MLR	=	Modern Language Review
MPh	=	Modern Philology
NkZ	=	Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift
OC	=	Oeuvres complètes
OL	=	Opera latina
PhJb	=	Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft
PhRe	=	Philosophical Review
PhRu	=	Philosophische Rundschau
PL	=	Patrologia Latina
PMLA	=	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PP	=	Past and Present
PSQ	=	The Political Science Quarterly

RF	=	Romanische Forschungen
RFNS	=	Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica
RGSPA	=	Revue Générale des Sciences Pures et Appliquées
RHLF	=	Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France
RHMC	=	Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine
RHS	=	Revue d'Histoire des Sciences
RiFi	=	Rivista di Filosofia
RIPh	=	Revue Internationale de Philosophie
RJb	=	Romanistisches Jahrbuch
RMM	=	Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale
RPh	=	Revue Philosophique
RR	=	Romanic Review
RThPh	=	Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie
SPh	=	Studies in Philology
SS	=	Sämtliche Schriften
SW	=	Sämtliche Werke
ThG	=	Theologie und Glaube
VS	=	Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century
ZfdPh	=	Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie
ZfP	=	Zeitschrift für Politik
ZfphF	=	Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung
ZfVS	=	Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft

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